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A

HISTORICAL MEMOIR

OF

FRÀ DOLCINO AND HIS TIMES;

BEING AN ACCOUNT OF

A GENERAL STRUGGLE FOR ECCLESIASTICAL REFORM,

AND OF

AN ANTI-HERETICAL CRUSADE IN ITALY, IN THE EARLY PART OF THE FOURTEENTH CENTURY.

BY L. MARIOTTI,

AUTHOR OF

"ITALY, PAST AND PRESENT," "ITALY IN 1848;"

ETC.

"Or dì a Frà Dolcin dunque che s' armi,
Tu che forse vedrai lo sole in breve,
S' egli non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,
Sì di vivanda che stretta di neve
Non rechi la vittoria al Novarese
Ch' altrimenti acquistar non sarà breve."

DANTE, *Inferno*, XXVIII. 58—64.

WW b. 25

LONDON:

LONGMAN, BROWN, GREEN, AND LONGMANS.

1853.

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PREFACE.

THE lines of Dante which have been taken as an epigraph to the present work, first directed my attention to the subject.

The vague but unanimous statement of the poet's commentators that Dolcino's main error consisted of a "community of goods and community of wives," made me anxious to ascertain to what extent an identity might be established between the Italian heresiarch of the thirteenth century, and the St. Simonians, and other agitators of the nineteenth.

As it always happens in historical studies, the subject widened on a closer acquaintance, and its interest deepened. I was surprised to find so many of the great social and moral questions which have stirred up mankind for the last eighteen hundred years, involved in what I had at first too hastily looked upon as a partial and local movement. That dark and sad, but to all appearance merely episodical, page of Italian history, furnished a clue to the knowledge of a vast conspiracy against the Church of

Rome — a conspiracy spreading over all European lands as far as the Church itself extended — fraught with ruin to it, and, but for the interference of extraneous political causes, pointing to a thorough and violent reformation — full two hundred years ere Luther was born.

Nor were the historical documents bearing upon the subject totally disproportionate to its importance. Together with many other names otherwise doomed to oblivion, Dante had embalmed Dolcino's memory, and that was sure, sooner or later, to awaken the curiosity of after generations. It was little more than the name that endured, truly; and that was seldom uttered without that indefinable awe, that prestige of horror, which has power to fascinate imagination in proportion to our defect of positive knowledge. Dolcino's history was, for many ages and in many countries, a forbidden subject; and when Muratori, little more than one hundred years ago, brought into light two historical documents, purporting to be, one a history of Dolcino and of his two years' war on the Alps, and the other an exposition of his errors and heresies, and an examination of his writings — both by contemporaneous anonymous writers — he did so with many a profession of his heartfelt detestation of this and of all other heresies, and with all due submission, even against

his own good common sense, to the decrees by which Rome had proscribed the memory of Dolcino and of his sect to all eternity.*

Some important particulars respecting both the heretic and his heresy were, however, previously to be gathered from some of the works on the Inquisition, particularly from the gloomy and bloody pages of Nicholas Eymeric, from Limborch's work, and the annexed Collection of Sentences pronounced by the Inquisitorial tribunal of Toulouse during the term of nineteen years.†

Some information could also be gleaned by the perusal of two out of the six lives of Pope Clement V., published by Baluze, in his biographical work on the Pontiffs of Avignon‡, and also in some passages

* Historia Dulcini, hæresiarchæ Novariensis, ab A. C. 1304 usque ad A. [illegible]07; auctore anonymo synchrono; ex codice Bibliothecæ Ambrosianæ, edita cum nonnullis animadversionibus Joseph. Anton. Saxii in Muratori, L. A. Scriptor. Rer. Italicar. tom. ix p. 475. Mediol. 1726. fol.—Additamentum ad Historiam fratris Dulcini, hæretici, ab auctore coævo scriptum, ex MS. Codice Bibliothecæ Ambrosianæ. Muratori, Rer. Ital. Script., tom. ix. p. 443.

† Eymerici, Nichol. Directorium Inquisitorum cum commentariis Francisci Pegnæ, &c. Venet. 1595. fol. — Limborch, Philipp. A. Historia Inquisitionis, cui subjungitur liber sententiarum Inquisitionis Tholosanæ, ab A. M.CCC.VII. ad A. M.CCC.XXIII. Amstelod. 1692. fol.

‡ Baluzii, Steph. Vitæ Paparum Avenionensium, hoc est Historia Pontificum Romanorum qui in Gallia sederunt ab A.C.

in the annalists of the Church, or in the very numerous chronicles of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, most of whom lie amongst that ponderous mass of historical erudition which Muratori provided for the illustration of Italian records. Finally Dolcino's history was briefly told by the earliest commentators of the Divine Comedy, and by none more minutely than by Benvenuto da Imola, who wrote about seventy years after Dolcino's death, and derived his knowledge from a personal interview with a nephew or grandson of one of the arch-heretic's associates.*

All these historical authorities I had already diligently consulted, when by a note to Mosheim's Institutes of Ecclesiastical History, I was made aware of a work entitled "History of the Order of the Apostles," written by the same German scholar, and published at Helmstadt, in 1748.† That was the

M.CCC.V. usque ad ann. M.CCC.XCIV., cum notis; Paris. 1715. 2 vols. fol.: particularly, Clementis V. Vita secunda, auct. Ptolomæo Lucense; and Vita quarta, auct. Bernhardo Guidone.

* Excerpta historica ex Commentariis MS.ptis. Benvenuti de Imola, in Comœdiam Dantis, ab eo circiter annum Christi M.CCC.LXX.VI. compositis, et in Estensi Bibliotheca adservatis, in Muratori, Antiquitat. Italic. Medii Ævi, tom. i. Mediol. 1741.

† Mosheim, Johann Lorenz von. Versuch einer unparteischen und gründlichen Ketzergeschichte. Zweite Auflage. Helmstaedt, 1748. 2 vols. 4to. — Geschichte des Apostel-Ordens, in dreien Büchern, in vol. i. pag. 193—397.

first attempt ever made towards a complete history of Dolcino and his apostolical fraternity. There is no English translation of that work of Mosheim; and the original itself is not easily found in this country. It leaves but little to desire in the way of minute research; but, to say nothing of its prolixity, it betrays on the part of the author an insufficient acquaintance with Italian political history, and gives rather an unfavourable impression of his power of generalisation of ideas, and of his ability to draw the most obvious conclusions from facts collected by him with so signal an industry, and so palpably, so inevitably leading thereto.

Another German work, bearing Dolcino's name on its title page, I deemed it necessary to procure. It is by Schlosser, the historian of "Europe in the Eighteenth Century;" and its object is to contrast Dolcino — a fanatic, with Abelard — a philosopher.* The part which concerns the Italian dissenter, merely intended as a set-off for the French divine, is sufficiently flimsy and barren. Nor has the whole work, perhaps, all the weight that the author's name would naturally lead the reader to expect.

In England or France, hardly as much as the

* Schlosser, Friedr. Christoph. Abälard und Dolcino, oder Leben und Meinungen eines Schwärmers und eines Philosophen. Gotha, 1807. 8vo.

mention of Dolcino's name occurs — even in works professing to embrace the whole subject of ecclesiastical history.

More recent writings on the history of Fra Dolcino have appeared both in Italy and in Germany.* They have been made the subject of some remarks in the Appendix at the close of this volume.

L. MARIOTTI.

Kensington Gate,
December 31. 1852.

* Baggiolini (Professore). Dolcino e i Patareni, Notizie Storiche. Novara, 1838. — Krone (Dr. Julius). Frà Dolcino und die Patarener, historische Episode aus den Piemontesischen Religionskriegen. Leipzig, 1844.

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FRA DOLCINO.

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§ 1. In the year 1307, on the first day of June, there was a burning of heretics at Vercelli.

It was neither a new nor a rare occurrence; for, since the pontificate of Gregory IX. (A.D. 1227—1241), hardly a year elapsed without the offering up of a similar holocaust in almost every city of Italy.

But in the present instance — that of Fra Dolcino and his accomplices — the event is set down with such minute accuracy in contemporary records; it stands forth in such bold relief in the midst of the great vicissitudes of that age of dawning light — the age of Dante, — that it is impossible not to look upon it as the most striking episode in that long tragedy of mediæval heresy; so that a clear exposition of its particulars, a summing up of its evidence, cannot fail to throw light, not merely on the individual case itself, but on the general subject, as well as on the country and period of time to which it belongs.

§ 2. From the first spread of Christianity there had always been heresy in Italy. The Ostrogoths of Theodoric, and the Lombards of Alboin, together with most of the other northern nations that restocked the exhausted provinces of the Western Empire, were Arians on their first settlement; and, although the kings of the latter nation, owing especially to the piety of their great queen, Theodolind, were won over to Latin orthodoxy, towards the close of the sixth century, yet it seems very clear that sheer habit or ignorance perpetuated some of their

tenets among their subjects and descendants; since Arianism was still rife in the regions of Padua, Verona, and Vicenza, in the tenth century *; and notions at variance with the common doctrine of the Trinity were entertained both by private individuals and by whole sects, throughout the twelfth and thirteenth. These notions, it may be safely presumed, continued latent in the country till they burst forth afresh at the general outbreak of the Reformation of the sixteenth century, under Lælius and Faustus Socini. †

§ 3. But so far as mere dissent from the Church of Rome might be stigmatised as heresy, there were infinite causes at work, both to promote and to keep it alive, especially in Northern Italy. The ninth and tenth centuries were said to be the age of bishops, as the eleventh and twelfth constituted the palmy era of the popes. Notwithstanding some claims established by Gregory I., at the end of the sixth century, the so called "Diocese of Italy," extending over Lombardy and Piedmont, with Milan at its head, was governed by princely prelates jealous of spiritual as well as temporal independence. Not

* Muratori, Antiquitates Italicæ Medii Ævi, Dissertatio lx. tom. v. p. 82. Ughelli, Italia Sacra, tom. v. p. 429—433.

† Bock, Fred. Sam. Historia Anti-trinitariorum, tom. ii. p. 418.

to be brought to bow to the authority of the Roman See, they were glad of any good subject of disagreement, and, in very frequent instances, they loudly disclaimed all connexion and rejected all communion with it. They scrupled not to charge it, and with too great a justice in the age of Marozia and Theodora, with utter corruption and venality, and attributed to it all the calamities of the country and of the Church itself.

Eager in their negation of hierarchical supremacy, they encouraged and professed several dogmas at variance with those of Rome. Some of them sided with the Greeks in their war against images, and extended their objections equally to the worship of relics and shrines, discountenanced pilgrimages, and contended that Christ had taught us "to bear his cross, and not to bow down to it." Others admitted the use of the vulgar tongues for church liturgy; and others, again, denounced war as unchristian, and equally opposed capital punishment and the administration of oaths under any pretence; whilst not a few proscribed auricular confession, and directed the faithful to look up to Christ alone for the remission of sins.*

* Bert, I Valdesi, ossiano, I Cristiani Primitivi, &c. Turin, 1849, cap. i., and the authorities quoted in Note A *bis*.

§ 4. During the best part of the eighth century, there was war in the East and West respecting the worship of images. The Italians of the sea-ports, of Romagna and of Rome itself, all subjects of the Eastern Emperors, warmly espoused the cause of the Pontiffs; as, independent of the bent of their minds on the religious question itself, they were too glad of any opportunity to shake off the yoke of their distant rulers; but the Lombard kings, notwithstanding their orthodoxy, were not only less ardent in their zeal for the Popes, but thought they could take advantage of the contest, to follow up their great scheme of the conquest of all Italy, and extend their sway over those provinces which were thus escaping from the grasp of their Grecian rivals: they thus engaged in those hostilities with Rome which led to the extinction of their dynasty, and to the conquest of Italy by Pepin and Charlemagne. The question of the worship of images was settled at Constantinople by the bigoted Empress Irene in 787, but it remained an open one in the West, till Charlemagne referred it to the Council of Frankfort, in 794. Three hundred bishops there assembled, amongst whom those of the Italian dioceses proposed, it is well known, a compromise, which would have rendered the presence of images in the churches sufficiently harmless. But the proneness of the vulgar

mind to superstition was not to be checked by the wisest synodal prescriptions. Notwithstanding the decrees by that and the subsequent Council of Paris, in 825, the ancient idolatry crept in throughout the West. At Turin, however, the Bishop, Claudius, by birth a Spaniard, a man too vastly in advance of his age, strong by the favour of the Emperor Louis the Pious, and of his son Lothaire the First, whose chaplain the Bishop was, continued boldly in his opposition against Rome, and thundered against her corrupt practices, from the year 823 to 842, and that with such effect, that "long after his death, there was less superstition in the region about Turin than in any other part of Europe." *

§ 5. The independence of these North-Italian dioceses, against which all the omnipotence of Charlemagne himself could not prevail, was chiefly displayed in a most important question of discipline, the marriage of the priests; a practice in defence of which the clergy of Milan thought they could plead the authority of their great primate Ambrosius, in the fourth century, and which frequent contact with the Greeks contributed to render very prevalent in Lombardy, down to the apostolate of the famous

* Mosheim, Institut. of Ecclesiastical History. London, 1841, vol. ii. p. 232.

St. Peter Damianus, in 1059, and which gave rise to the most dreadful commotions throughout that century.

The efforts of that zealous man, St. Peter Damianus, and the influence of Hildebrand, the great maker and ruler of popes from 1049 to 1073, and himself a pope, under the dread name of Gregory VII., from the latter year to 1086, achieved not a little towards the establishment of pontifical supremacy. But the seventh Gregory and his successors, from 1075 to 1122, had a far higher game on hand than even the subjugation of bishops. Their first attacks were directed against lay potentates. They had to fight those battles of Church against State with Henry IV. and Henry V. of Germany, that went by the name of "war of investitures;" and during that contest they almost invariably met the Lombard bishops and their "concubinarian" clergy in the ranks of their opponents. The close of that quarrel was the almost immediate signal for another still greater strife, in which the Italian cities stood up for their municipal freedom against Frederic I., Barbarossa (from 1152 to 1183), and Frederic II. (1212—1250). Here the cause of the country and that of the Papacy were made identical; and the Italians had hardly laid the Empire prostrate under their feet, when they perceived that they lay themselves at the mercy of the

Church. Alexander III. and Innocent III. exacted spiritual submission in return for that political emancipation which their very questionable "patriotism" boasted of having promoted. Papal legates, the precursors of Dominican inquisitors, reared up their dreaded tribunals, and tried the efficiency of fire and the sword towards the promotion of uniformity of creed.

§ 6. There was, therefore, no lack of native heresy in Italy from the earliest times. But more lately, and especially on the first awakening of the European mind after that chaotic year 1000, new doctrines were said to have crept in from the East. These were especially the dogmas of the Paulicians, which, tainted with ancient Gnosticism or Manichæism, had travelled over Bulgaria and Hungary, and spread all over Germany, France, and Italy.* These broke out almost simultaneously in various parts of Europe, at the very dawn of the eleventh century; but owing, perhaps, to a more uninterrupted intercourse of Italy with all parts of the East by sea, it would still seem that the error had its chief seat in that country, and was hence communicated to the neighbouring regions beyond the mountains.

§ 7. Thus the eleven or thirteen persons, amongst

* Gibbon, Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. liv.

whom several canons and other conspicuous characters, who perished by fire at Orleans, under the orders of King Robert, in 1017, or 1022, were represented as having received the infection by an Italian woman, who wandered about the country perverting the people's minds. Other Italians, amongst them, one Gandolfo, spread errors of a similar description at Arras, amongst men of the lower orders, in 1030: these, however, had the good fortune to be reclaimed by the admonitions of Gerhard, Bishop of Cambray and Arras, and escaped the doom of their Orleanese brethren: for a long course of years, in short, these various denominations of heretics, of France and Germany, looked up to Lombardy as their common centre, and sent their ministers to that country for ordination and instruction.*

§ 8. In Italy itself, the remedy of capital punishment was first tried against one of these same heretics, by name Wilgard of Ravenna, and some of his followers, about the year 1000†; but in 1034, we are more distinctly told, Heribert, Archbishop of Milan, a restless ambitious spirit, whose game it was to set

* Mosheim, Ecclesiast. Histor., vol. ii. p. 391., note. Neander's General History of the Christian Religion and Church. Bohn's edit.; London, 1852, vol. vi. p. 348, &c.

† Glabri Radulphi, Hist. sui Temp., lib. iii. cap. xii. ap. Duchesne, Hist. Francor. Script. tom. iv. p. 23.

up monarchs and to pull them down, on his return from his expedition to Burgundy, where he had helped the Emperor Conrad II. the Salic to that kingdom, as he had previously bestowed that of Italy on him,—happened during his stay at Turin to hear of a heresy which had sprung up at Monforte, a castle on the Tanaro in a district of the county of Alba, called le Langhe, belonging then to the diocese of Asti. Heribert had one of the sect, apparently a teacher, Gherardo by name, brought before him. The man underwent a strict examination, and despite many quibbles and subterfuges, betrayed the unsound doctrines which he secretly entertained, and which he now boldly declared, offering himself to uphold them against any manner of torture and death: whereupon the archbishop, by the help, or at least with the consent of Manfred Count of Turin and Marquis of Susa, and of his brother Alric, Bishop of Asti, possessed himself of Monforte, and conveyed all its inhabitants to Milan, together with the countess herself of the castle, who had drunk the poison of heresy with the rest.

At Milan the archbishop tried all the might of his eloquence upon those hardened misbelievers. But instead of being convinced, these managed to bring to their own views as many of the lower orders as visited them in their confinement: till, at last, the

most conspicuous laymen at Milan, in high indignation, heaped up a great pile of wood at their prison door, and set fire to it; then, planting a crucifix opposite to it, offered their captives the alternative between bowing to that sign of redemption and abjuring their errors, or perishing in the flames. A few of the unfortunate heretics waxed faint in sight of so cruel a death and recanted, but by far the greatest number, covering their faces with both hands, flung themselves into the burning mass.*

All this, it further appears, was done against the wish of the archbishop—*nolente Heriberto*—for that prelate was, perhaps, brave and high-minded, and did not think, with King Robert of France, that "the torch of the Catholic faith would burn any brighter" for being fed with such a fuel; but mighty prince and stout warrior as he was, and a ruler of princes abroad, the archbishop was at the greatest pains to keep his seat at home; from which he was indeed repeatedly driven by popular outbreaks. The Italian cities, even at that early period, had already attained too high a degree of turbulent independence for any supreme magistrate, were he clerk or layman, to venture to put a check on their passions.

* Landulphi Senioris, Histor. Mediolanens., lib. ii. cap. xvii. ap. Muratori, Rer. Italic. Script., tom. iv. p. 88.

Thus early had the inquisitiveness of a daring, enterprising generation been turned upon the dread topics of religious controversy. The faggots of Orleans and Milan had aroused general curiosity as to the real import of those so-called Manichæan doctrines, which, for a long course of time, seemed to be regarded as the heresy, *par excellence,* to which the most heinous offences were vaguely imputed, but which, even after the conviction, punishment, last speeches and confessions of their promoters, remained still involved in so provoking a mystery. Sectarians charged with Manichæism were in the meanwhile hunted out all over the West. Four of them, it results from the general history of Languedoc*, were immolated at Toulouse, and under their ashes those smouldering embers lay perhaps concealed, which were to break out into so vast a conflagration, more than a century later, at the time of the tragedy of the Albigenses. Other unfortunate beings were put to death in various parts of France about 1046, and others hanged at Gotzlar, by order of Henry III. of Germany, in 1052. These suffered, it is said, upon the simple evidence of their own pale faces; for that paleness was ascribed to excessive austerity, particularly to total abstinence from animal food or from

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, tom. ii. p. 376.

any thing else that had lived; and this Pythagorean frugality — this strict *vegetarianism* — was numbered amongst the characteristic abominations of the sect; so that the offenders were often convicted upon their mere refusal to kill a chicken and eat it.*

§ 9. But besides these tenebrous doctrines, which men were fain to trace to ancient Eastern errors, other heresies of more recent and spontaneous growth were often blended with, and mistaken for them. The Church was at this epoch grounding its sway on popular enthusiasm; it ministered to it by the daily production of relics, by the canonization of new saints; it overawed it by all the prestige of art, by the erection of stupendous cathedral and monastic edifices, and laboured hard at the same time to bring about a strict definition of its tenets, to establish a universal permanent creed.

This illiberal and somewhat novel limitation of belief could not fail to meet with opposition at every step. Iconoclasm, for instance, was still rampant. One Leutard, a native of Vertus, near Chalons in Champagne, signalised himself by enmity against crosses and images, towards the year 1000. As he added to it some strong objection to the payment of tithes, he was soon silenced by Gibuin, the bishop of

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, tom. ii. p. 448.

his diocese, who shut him up for the purpose of convincing him of his mistake, and so plied him with cogent arguments, as to drive him, in sheer despair, to drown himself in a well—if, indeed, the prelate himself did not deem it expedient to send him to look for truth, where it is said to lie—at the bottom of it.* Yet Leutard's ideas were still in the ascendant thirty years after his death, since a detestation of idolatry was amongst the chief errors of those heretics of Arras, to whom allusion has already been made.†

§ 10. But far fiercer disputes arose throughout this century with respect to the awful theory of transubstantiation. It seems that Leuteric, Archbishop of Sens, entertained some doubts as to the real presence of the body of Christ in the Eucharist, towards the year 1004; but about forty years later, a more strenuous champion entered the lists against the orthodox theory. This was Berenger, Archdeacon of Angers, a rare man, distinguished no less for talents and learning than for that happy temper of strength and dexterity of mind which enabled him to fight the battles of truth without falling a victim to it. Again and again he had to appear before councils, there to meet a formidable array of his

* Glabri Radulphi, Hist., lib. ii. cap. xi. Hist. Franc. tom. iv. p. 23

† *Antè*, § 7.

adversaries; he had to bow before their decision, to give up his own doctrines, to subscribe to their articles, to swallow one after another four different formulas, by which the inscrutable mystery was subsequently bodied forth, and always stepped back, a kind of theological Galileo, with an *Eppur-si-muove* air of defiance, and always protested that his recantation was the result of compulsion, always revindicated the soundness of his tenets, won his own bishops and almost the Pope Gregory VII. himself, over to them, and resting on their support, he renewed the battle, and agitated all Europe and filled it with his name, from the year 1045 to 1079. By similar shifts and a rare good luck, he managed, nevertheless, to die a natural death, in his place of retirement, in a convent of the Isle of St. Côme near Tours, in 1088.

§ 11. But, notwithstanding this immense stir in men's minds, there occurs an apparent lull, during all the rest of the eleventh and part of the following century, if not in the progress of heterodox heresies, at least in the sanguinary measures which marked and undoubtedly promoted it. Persecution was not as yet organised and reduced to system. The mass of the people was at a loss what to think of these sectarians, and how to deal with them. At Milan, as we have seen *, the lower classes lent a willing ear to the

* *Antè*, § 7.

heretics of Monforte. At Orleans, on the contrary, the populace had been fanaticised by false representations, by calumnies, which would appear as atrocious to them as they are egregiously absurd in our eyes. King Robert, who scrupled not to resort to the tricks of the meanest espionage to bring their guilt into light, and was seconded in his base intrigues by Richard II., Duke of Normandy, had no slight trouble to save his victims from the incensed multitude, who would have rent those misbelievers to pieces, even before conviction. His queen, Constance, whose spiritual adviser, Stephen the Canon, was amongst those criminals, had to rescue them by personal interference. At the same time, when their guilt was satisfactorily proved, the Queen was either herself so much indignant at their duplicity and hypocrisy, or else so fain to give in to popular resentment, that, as the unfortunate men were being led to execution, she stood before them with a stick in her hand, and struck with it her former confessor, dashing out one of his eyes.

Nor, it is well to observe, were the victims themselves, in this instance, free from that fanaticism which brought them to their doom: for these men of Orleans, who by the evidence of their very enemies, were so highly distinguished by learning, virtue, and true piety, were yet so infatuated as to

expect that the hand of God would be made visible in their behalf: they waited not for the sword of the executioner, but eagerly plunged into the flames, in full belief, if contemporary records can be trusted, that innocence and the righteousness of their cause would miraculously carry them through the ordeal, and convince the by-standers of the iniquity of their judgment.*

§ 12. On the other hand, the clergy, although they were at the bottom of all the mischief, although they appealed to the worst passions of the blind multitude, were not, as yet, quite unanimous as to the most efficacious means of extirpating the evil seed. We have already seen † the Archbishop of Milan and him of Cambrai, to their eternal honour, refusing their countenance to any effusion of blood. In the same manner Waso, Bishop of Liege, recommended moderation in the name, and in words not unworthy of the Founder himself, of Christianity. What more! Gregory VII. himself, that personification of priestly harshness and arrogance, repeatedly, as we have said, came out in support of that versatile Berenger of Angers, either because the Pope enter-

* Glab. Radulph. lib. iii. cap. viii. Harduin, Concil. tom. vi. part 1. p. 821.

† *Antè*, § 7, 8,

tained views not averse to the theories of the Archdeacon, or because he would allow him the benefit of the doubt, or, at last, out of personal regard for the genius and character of that daring dissenter.

§ 13. So long also as the great drama of the War of Investitures was acting on the European stage, it was but too natural, both that the whole attention of the masses should be absorbed by it, to the utter disregard of minor topics of controversy, and that the Church, who was then grappling with all the might of empire, should look, in silence at least, if not with forbearance, on the opposition of obscure sectarians, whom she knew she could always bring to order in the end, provided she came off victorious from the present death struggle.

§ 14. This may account for the fact that, although heresy, and especially Eastern heresy, must in the natural course of things, and can actually be proved to have made its way into France either through Germany or Italy, it yet seemed for a long time to have struck deeper roots, and certainly broke out with greater violence, in the former country: because the land of the Kaiser and that of the Pontiff were more immediately interested in the issue of a contest that was to decide on the ascendancy of the one over the other; whilst France, at that epoch a country in a state of helpless feudal anarchy, without any but a

nominal sovereign, without a united national existence, was left a comparatively passive spectator of the great strife, and some of its provinces, especially in the south,—such as Languedoc, Provence and Dauphiny, as well as Savoy and part of Piedmont,—enjoyed under their feudal lords a long period of ease and prosperity, allowing full scope for the development of intellectual activity, a great part of which was turned upon theological speculation. But when at length Gregory VII.'s scheme was mature, and his successors Alexander III. and Innocent III., backed by popular support, had been able to tread upon the anointed heads of the monarchs of the earth, they found themselves able to do battle with those heretics, who were now the only enemies still standing up against them, and even to make the humbled sovereigns themselves instrumental in the work of persecution; and their first attacks were precisely directed against that thriving region between the Alps and the Pyrenees, not only because there the infection was supposed to have made the greatest ravages, but also because that country could be said to belong to no masters, and the dissension of its lords pointed it out as an easy prey to the covetousness of unscrupulous neighbours, when the pretexts of pious zeal afforded a convenient cloak to the designs of ambition.

§ 15. Truly the state of religion in those provinces

of Southern France, towards the latter end of the twelfth century, must have come near to a very Babel of sects. The original heretics, the successors of the sufferers of Orleans and Monforte, supposed to be of Manichæan descent, and to have still their main seat in Bulgaria, went by a variety of names, the most common of which were those of Boulgres (Bulgarians), and Publicans (probably a corruption of Paulicians), appellations which are considered conclusive towards establishing the Oriental derivation of these sects. To all these and other denominations of Bons-hommes (Bos-homos), Picards, &c., the more general name of Albigenses was substituted, when their tenets were solemnly condemned by a council held at Lombers, in the diocese of Alby (Albigea), in the month of May, 1165.

In Italy, men supposed to hold the same belief went by the name of Paterini, a word of uncertain derivation, perhaps arising from their willingness meekly to submit to all sufferings for Christ's sake (pati), perhaps from a quarter in the city of Milan named Pataria; and more lately by that of Cathari (the Pure, Puritans), which was soon corrupted into Gazari, whence the German Ketzer, the general word for a heretic.*

* Mosheim (Ketzergeschichte, part II., Geschichte des Apostelordens, note 7.), has a long dissertation on the word Gazari,

In France itself, meanwhile, the Albigensian doctrines were blended with every possible shade of opinion. The Church itself, in the fulness of its power, never hesitated to declare every one who dissented from her on any subject as a heretic or Albigeois; and, on the other hand, all dissenters, no matter how widely otherwise asunder in their creed, found a point of contact in their hatred of the Church, and joined in one unanimous outcry against her corruption.

Thus the heretic, who, for above twenty years, attempted a restoration of a simple religion in Southern France, the well-known Pierre de Bruys, a native of Gap or Embrun, was guilty of no worse opinions than those started by Leutard or Berenger in the previous century. He warred against images and all other visible emblems of worship, he questioned the expediency of infant baptism, the soundness of the doctrine of transubstantiation, and opposed prayers for the dead; but he professed poverty for himself, and would have equally enforced it upon all the ministers of the altar. He protested against the

which he derives from Chazaria or Gazaria, the name in the middle ages for the ancient Taurica Chersonesus, now Little Tartary, the province whence the Paulicians are supposed to have come into Italy; but he does not prove the derivation even to his own satisfaction.

payment of tithes; and it was, most probably, owing to this last, the most heinous of all offences, that he was, towards 1130, burnt with slow fire by a populace maddened by the priests, at St. Gilles, on the Rhone, —passing thus, as a charitable advocate of the orthodox Church boldly asserts, from one fire into another, but from a transitory into an unquenchable one.*

His followers rallied, notwithstanding, and changed their name of Petrobrusians into that of Henricians, when the mantle of their first master rested on the shoulders of Henry, supposed by Mosheim† to have been an Italian Eremite monk; a man of far greater gifts of eloquence and enthusiasm, whose inspired language sounded in the ears of the multitude like the voice of prophecy. Barefooted, worn out with fast and hardships, this man for several years preached with success at Lausanne, Mans, Poitiers, and Bordeaux. He fell in, at last, in 1147, at Toulouse, with no less formidable an antagonist than St. Bernard, who had it in his power to refute mere arguments by miracles, and before whom the heresiarch had soon to decamp. He was, however, apprehended in his flight, and brought before Pope Eugene III., who was then (1148) holding a council at Rheims, for the confusion

* Petri Venerabilis, contra Petrobrusianos, lib. in Bibl. Cluniac., p. 1117.

† Eccles. Hist., vol. ii. p. 501.

of all heresy. Henry himself met with no worse fate than an obscure death in prison, but his doctrines were condemned, and his followers either joined or were confounded with the Albigensian sectarians, and were soon, at any rate, involved in their fate.

§ 16. But a far more numerous, more enduring, more interesting communion, was that of the Waldenses, equally belonging to France and Italy; a sect fond of ascribing its origin to the purest Christianity of primitive times, and whose tenets were and are, in fact, the same as we have seen held at different periods by the different pastors of the Italian dioceses, previous to their submission to Roman authority, and by no one more distinctly than by the famous Claude of Turin in the ninth century * — but whose name, at least, has been traced to Peter of Waldo or Vaud, a rich merchant of Lyons, who distributed his wealth among the poor, and dedicated himself to a truly evangelical mission, from 1160 to 1180.

The Waldenses, limited at the present day to two or three poor but verdant valleys of Piedmont, spread at first with amazing rapidity, both throughout France and Italy, under the various names of Leonists or

* See Bert (I Valdesi, &c. chap. i.—iii.), who has ably summed up the arguments of Leger, Turner, &c. See also *antè*, 3, 4.

Poor Men of Lyons, Sabatati or Insabatati (wearers of sandals or wooden shoes), &c. &c. Their doctrines were, on the whole, greatly akin to the little we know of those of the Petrobrusians and Henricians. Besides their dread of idolatry, and strong objections to some of the sacraments as administered by the Church; besides a rigid condemnation of auricular confession, and of some of the new contrivances of purgatory and indulgences, they took a very literal view of the poverty enjoined by Christ upon his followers and of the precepts of the Gospel respecting war, oaths, and capital punishment: they chose their elders and deacons rather out of consideration for the "gifts of grace" and moral character, than for their literary attainments; they wished them to be plain men, poor, laborious; in every thing conformable to the strictest pattern of evangelical or "apostolical" life.

§ 17. This anxious desire to bring back the world, and especially the Church, to apostolical innocence and discipline, was the great leading thought of nearly all these sects; and especially of those which actually assumed the name of "apostolical;" which were about the same time flourishing in Burgundy, in Guienne and elsewhere; some of which, indeed were severely taken to task by Eugene III., at the above-mentioned Council of Rheims.* The brother Weavers of Flanders,

* *Antè*, § 15.

and some of the better varieties of those Beghards and Beguins of Germany, France and Belgium, which became so strong in the thirteenth century, may be considered to have sprung from these first apostolical associations. Mosheim has laboured hard to assign a different origin and ascribe peculiar characters and tendencies to these sects.* The line of demarkation might perhaps be drawn, by distinguishing the lazy, profligate, disorderly rabble, who lived indifferently upon alms or plunder for God's sake, from those whose calling it was to work as well as pray; who asked nothing from the world they shrunk from and abjured. Some of the Beguins, especially in Belgium, were so very harmless and exemplary as to pass undisturbed through all subsequent centuries, tolerated though indeed never actually countenanced by Rome.

§ 18. But the Waldenses, and all those who, not satisfied with literal compliance with evangelical precepts for themselves, wished to impose their observance on the clergy,—those who interfered with their wealth, and exposed the recent practices contrived to add to their revenues,—met with the virulent attacks of the Church and all its saints. It was to little purpose that Peter of Waldo himself and his Italian followers, evinced some repugnance to absolute

* Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 578.

separation from the Church of Rome, the only true church of Christ in their estimation even in spite of its corruption; they were nevertheless cast out of its bosom by a bull of Lucius III., in 1183; and then it was perhaps, that, especially the Ultramontane or French Waldenses, proclaimed that the spirit of God had departed from that Church, and threw out the first hints about its being typified by the "Scarlet Lady" in the Book of Revelations.

§ 19. With all the purity of their dogmas, and irreproachable life, the Waldenses and other apostolical associations thus found themselves in the ranks of the most determined enemies of Rome, and were invariably named by orthodox writers in the same breath with the Albigenses of Languedoc, and the Cathari of Lombardy; they were therefore made partakers of all the odium of the abominable errors and still more abominable morals imputed to these latter denominations.

A certain looseness of principle, deliberate lewdness and debauchery, was for a long time considered as the invariable consequence of the least deviation from the incontrovertible truth, that is, of the slightest dissent from the Established Church. The priests were aware that the passions of the multitude could hardly be aroused in detestation of mere abstract theories. The most startling, most revolting, most absurd and

pitiful stories were therefore got up by the zealous denouncers of heresy: from mere disregard of fast-days to cannibalism, no sins were too atrocious for them, said the priests; and as either from fear or other reasons, the most prudent of those dissenters met in secret, and involved their transactions in mystery, the darkest suspicions, the most obvious calumnies, gained an easy credit; and that terrible word "heretic," soon came to be associated, in the people's mind, with the worst outrages that either abandoned villany or ranting madness could perpetrate in defiance of all the laws of God and men.

§ 20. Truly, there may have been, among those heresiarchs, individuals whose honesty of purpose or soundness of understanding the most impartial critic may feel inclined to question. There was, for instance, one Tanquelm or Tanquelin, who for above ten years (1115—1125), turned so many heads in the Low Countries, as to be able to march triumphantly from Utrecht to Antwerp at the head of 3000 well armed votaries; and who yet (if we may believe the testimony of his contemporary, Abailard, who was not himself above the suspicion of heresy, whose whole life was agitated, whose memory is still open to attacks on that account)*, professed to be God, or the Son of God,—at any rate looked upon

* Abailard, Introduct. ap. Theologiam, lib. ii. oper. p. 1066.

himself as a fit abode for God's Spirit, and upon the strength of that conviction, celebrated his betrothal with an image of the Virgin Mary, making the bridal ceremony the occasion for a feast, in which, as in all orgies of this description, full license was given to his "innumerable" followers to yield to the impulse of their passions. The enthusiasm of these people for their inspired chief was so great that they drank, as a sacrament, the water used by him in his ablutions. But Tanquelm, we are told in the same breath, was very loud in his invectives against the vices of the clerical order; the inveteracy of these latter against him, the name of Antichrist by which they designated him, the fury with which one of them finally slew him at Antwerp in the midst of his successful career, may be in some measure accounted for. "He declared himself to be God; ordered daughters to be deflowered in the presence of their mothers; fathers and husbands considered themselves highly honoured when the Messiah chose their daughters or wives for the gratification of his lust; and he set himself against the payment of tithes." Thus runs, in this and in many similar cases, the climax of heretical enormities.*

* Dictionnaire des Hérésies, 2 vols. Paris, 1762; or the German Translation, Ketzer lexicon, 3 vols. 8vo. Wurtzburg, 1838. art. Tanchelm.

§ 21. Equal, if not greater commotion was about the same time created by a wealthy knight of Brittany, by name Éon de l'Étoile, who also fancied he was acting under godly inspiration, or believed himself appointed to a supreme mission. This strange conceit had come upon him from some words used by the priests in exorcising evil spirits:—"Per eum qui venturus est judicare vivos et mortuos." The nasal French pronunciation of the word *eum*, made him believe that it was by him, *eon*, that the quick and the dead were to be judged. The oddity found its partisans, as everything monstrous never failed to do in those unhappy times, and the madman was deemed worthy of being dragged before Eugene III. at the council of Rheims, in 1148, together with Henry and other originators of more sane opinions. There, like Henry, Éon died in prison; but great numbers of his followers were brought to the stake, especially by the watchful activity of the bishop of St. Malo, who won at this juncture the nickname of Jean de la Grille (John the Gridiron, or Jack the Broiler), an appellation with which the zealous prelate was highly flattered.* The Eonites, who had been taught by their leader that faith would give them a command over the elements, leaped gladly into the flames, as

* Hist. de Bretagne, des Bénédictins, liv. v. p. 210.

we have seen the Manichæans of Orleans *,—in full expectation that they could walk scatheless through them. They declared themselves cheated in their dying breath, and ended thus, disenchanted at least, if not repentant.†

§ 22. Almost every religious fever, in that singular age, assumed, or was supposed to assume, a heretic character. It was so with the Caputiati, or Capuchons, or White Hoods, a sect originating with a woodcutter of Auvergne, by name Durand, about the year 1182. Their primary object was the maintenance of peace, and the extermination of the disbanded soldiery, whom the English kings had spread over the south of France, and were now ravaging the country under the name of Routiers or Cotereaux. The members of this religious association were bound by no vow, and made no profession of any particular faith; they were only distinguished by the white head-gear that gave them their name, and wore a little leaden image of the Virgin on their breast. They found favour at first with the bishops, especially in Burgundy and the Berri, and were even, from the best political causes, countenanced by Philip Augustus. They thus rose to such a degree of power,

* *Antè*, § 11.

† Baron. Annal. Eccles. ad ann. 1148.

that on the 20th of July, 1183, they surrounded a body of seven thousand of the marauding party, and suffered not one man to escape. They were, however, soon intoxicated with success, and threw out some hints about restoring the primæval liberty of mortals and universal equality; thereby incurring the displeasure of Hugo Bishop of Auxerre, who took arms against them, and put an end to the sect by the might of the sword in 1186.*

It is not unlikely that some of the Apostolical sects now numerous in France had joined the White Hoods and spread their notions among them; though most of these sects, like the Waldenses, were rigid observers of non-resistance principles, and could, therefore, take no share in the warlike exploits of the Capuchons. The great doctrine of the "Apostles" consisted in flying before or yielding to persecution; in deceiving rather than confronting their foes. One of them, called Terrius, for a long time provided for his safety, about this same epoch, by hiding in the woods near Corbigni, in the diocese of Nevers. He had two old women among his disciples, one of whom he called "Mary," and the other "the Church," and he had instructed his followers, whenever brought before

* Chroniq. de S. Denis, ap. Script. Rev. Franc. tom. xvii. p. 354.

ecclesiastical courts, to swear by "Holy Mary" that they had no other creed than that of "Holy Church."*

§ 23. If we dwell on these worst features of the sorry vagaries of mediæval heresy, it is merely because every one of these particulars will be found to have a distinct bearing on the individual case we have on hand. Nothing is more striking in the accounts of these melancholy events than the frequent repetition of the same phenomena, the reproduction of the same charges, notwithstanding distance of age and locality, in spite of difference of mind and purpose of the various sectarians. The same strange mixture of absurdity and iniquity, of duplicity and infamy, was equally imputed to the simplest and holiest, and to the weakest and most fiendish of them; so as to render it next to impossible to discriminate between what may have been the result of ignorance or wilful malignity, and what may be stated as positive fact.

Hallam asserts, very justly †, that the tenets of the Albigenses, Cathari, &c., are only to be collected from the mouths of their adversaries, as no apology of their own survives; also, that almost every shade of heterodoxy was found among those dissidents, till

* Dictionnaire des Hérésies, art. Terrius.

† Hallam, A View of Europe in the Middle Ages, chap. iv. part II. London, 1846, vol. ii. p. 438—449., and notes.

it vanishes in a simple protestation against the tyranny and wealth of the clergy. He next proceeds to exonerate the Waldenses, the only sect that can at the present day give a good account of itself, from any heresy that could disqualify them for communion with the reformed churches of the sixteenth century. Whether the line of demarkation which distinguished their tenets from those of the Albigenses originally existed, or whether the most objectionable of these latter were repudiated by the brethren of the Alpine congregations, when they deemed it expedient to associate their cause with that of the followers of Luther and Calvin, may yet be matter of discussion. The animosity of the Church of Rome against those guileless "poor men," was always, at any rate, as implacable as that which led to the crusade against the Albigenses; notwithstanding the candour with which some blundering monks were induced to admit that the disciples of Waldo were less irreclaimably perverted, and less irreconcilably sundered from Rome.

§ 24. In the meanwhile the twelfth century had raised throughout Europe, and especially in the south of France, a most luxuriant crop of heretic weeds, just at the time that the Church was whetting its scythe for the bloody harvest. One half of the population of Toulouse and other Languedocian and

Provençal cities, was tainted with either the one or the other of the manifold errors prevailing. These gained ground, especially among the lower orders; but men of high station, and even the feudal lords of the country, lent a willing ear to the obnoxious teachers, and the "apparent sanctity" of their lives inclined them to favour their proceedings. It is not a little remarkable that this same twelfth century was an age of religious commotion all the world over. The Mahometans were never more fiercely distracted by heretic and even by unbelieving sects: and out of four and twenty Messiahs who have created a stir among the Jews, since the crucifixion of the one in whom Christians believe, no less than ten belong to this century alone.*

A description of the war against the Albigenses cannot enter into our present plan. How the popes, in the well-tried inefficiency of frequent councils, in their dissatisfaction with the slackness and lukewarmness of worldly-minded bishops, trusted the Cistercian monks with the promulgation of a crusade; how these acquitted themselves of their task with a zeal which made Innocent III. himself shudder at his own work: how the ardour of the French knights, whom neither exhortations nor indulgences could any

* Buck's Theological Dictionary, art. Messiah.

longer engage in the distant expeditions of Palestine, burst out afresh at the prospect of an easier and more profitable enterprise, so near home; what base views of worldly aggrandisement were blended with the furtherance of the so-called cause of heaven; how castle after castle was stormed, women and infants, the guilty and the innocent, were put to the sword, in compliance with the famous words of Arnaud Amalric, Abbot of Citeaux and Legate of the Pope, to the soldiers, who showed some perplexity as to the means of distinguishing the orthodox from the heretics at the Storming of Bezières: "Kill them all; the Lord will know his own!"* how from 15,000 to 60,000 victims perished in that town alone, and how many thousand more at Carcassonne, Minerve, Lavaur, and other places; how many were slain in cold blood, horridly mutilated, burnt by wholesale in the churches where they took shelter; how the territory of Toulouse was deliberately turned into a wilderness, and the sun of Provence set for ever, and its early civilisation, its troubadour poetry, was stifled in blood—all has been too faithfully told

* "Tuez-les tous: Dieu connait ceux qui sont à lui."—"Cedite eos, novit enim Dominus qui sunt ejus." Raynald, Annales Ecclesiast. ad ann. 1209; Cæsar. Heisterbac. lib. v. c. 21., in Bibl. Patr. Cisterc. tom. iii. p. 139.; Hist. du Languedoc, liv. xxi. ch. 57. p. 169.

by Sismondi, with a glaring vividness, a harrowing minuteness, which render the third and fourth volumes of this history of the French all that is most horrible in the records, even of the country of the St. Barthelemi and of the September massacres.

§ 25. The din of that war was over (1207—1229); the fires of Languedoc were subsiding only to burst up here and there in all parts of Europe. The mere recital of those sanguinary deeds roused the tiger, which always lies latent in some corner of the human heart. The guilt of the misbelievers was by the ignorant multitude estimated with the measure of its atrocious punishment. The heretic was put out of the pale of common humanity. The Church of Rome, in the arrogance of that first success, gave rule and method to popular ferocity. The inquisition stepped in to consume the relics of the crusade. Every where it found ready auxiliaries either in designing princes, such as Philip Augustus, who had too many reasons to humour Innocent III., independent of that zeal which made him boast that "throughout his whole realm, he did not suffer a dissenter to live,"* or else in more upright and generous rulers, such as St. Louis, a king not open to many reproaches in other matters, but who knew

* Guillelm. Britonis, Philippidos, lib. i.

not how otherwise to deal with heretics "except with his sword, which every honest layman should thrust into their entrails as far as it would go."*

Thus the Albigensian crusade had scarcely begun, when a great number of the disciples of Amaury of Chartres, whose offence, independent of some very harmless quibbles belonging to their craft (they were all teachers of divinity), which we shall have to revert to, consisted in opposing the claims of the clergy to the receipt of tithes, perished in the flames, under the first-named of those monarchs, in 1209; and the war in Languedoc was hardly at an end, when Gregory IX. stirred the sovereign Bishops of Germany to preach a crusade against other heretics, whom their enemies were at a loss how otherwise to designate than by the name of the place where they mustered in the greatest numbers, and called them Stedingers, from Steding, a district in ancient Friesland, in the modern provinces of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst†, or else Hallæans, from the town of Hallæ in Swabia.

* "Mais que de son épée, de quoi il doit donner parmi le ventre dedans, tant avant comme elle y peut entrer." — Joinville, Hist. de S. Louis, 1761, p. 12.

† Sismondi (Hist. des Franç. vol. ii. p. 238.) confounds this Steding with Stettin in Pomerania. Comp. with Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 610. note.

§ 26. There is something so singular in the origin of these German sects, as given by anti-heretical writers *, that we feel tempted to write down their own legend, in their own language, as the very best illustration of the spirit of the age.

A lady, they say, the wife of a military officer, had gone to church to partake of the sacrament, and handed over to the priest the customary offering. Her "mite" was found insufficient, and the priest bethought himself of a strange trick to recall the penitent to a sense of her meanness. He waited for the solemn hour of communion; and as the lady put forth her tongue to receive the holy wafer, he laid upon it, instead of the host, the very piece of coin of her oblation. Absorbed in her devotional feelings, she did not perceive the change at the moment; but when she came to swallow the coin, and was nearly choked by it, a sudden terror came over her. She thought that the transmutation of bread into copper was the result of miraculous agency, and that Heaven wished thus to give her a sign of its displeasure at her avarice. Her agitation betrayed itself on her countenance; it was perceived by the husband, who was kneeling by her side, and the cause of it was soon made manifest to the whole congregation. The of-

* Ketzer-lexicon, art. Städlhings

ficer appealed to the bishop, that the offender should be brought to condign punishment, and, unable to obtain redress, he took the law in his own hand and slew the sacrilegious priest. A thundering decree of excommunication was the consequence of his rashness; but the pride and avarice of the German clergy had already prepared the ground for a general protest. The device of the priest of Steding was so base and cunning; it evinced so utter a contempt for what was held up to the multitude as the most awful of religious mysteries, that indignation broke through all restraints: "Down with the priests!" was the cry, and, unable to distinguish between the true and false ministers of God—it is always the Catholic authorities we quote from,—the incensed populace turned against religion itself, they declared Christianity to be the work of the Spirit of Evil, and set up the Devil against it. To him they paid worship under the appearance of a hideous toad and other monsters; and as the crusaders were at the very moment butchering "the Saints" in Languedoc, so they deemed themselves entitled to reprisals, by massacring as many of the priests as fell into their hands. The Reformation might thus have been effected in Germany three centuries before the time appointed; but the bishops of Lubeck, Bremen, and Minden, as well as those of Styria and other parts of South Germany, assembled

a host of 40,000 men, under the standard of the cross, and gave the heretics a pitched battle, where 6,000 of the combatants of these latter fell: the rest was exterminated by a series of direful executions throughout the country. A.D. 1234.

Besides a refusal to pay tithes, and wish to be free from the rapacity of the clergy, it is utterly impossible to substantiate any serious charge against these people. They were a free, manly, earnest race; and nothing but the perverseness and malignity of the too famous fanatic, Conrad of Marburg, the legate of Gregory IX., could have dreamed of attributing Manichæan subtleties to so a simple a set of believers.*

§ 27. In Italy heresy might equally be said to be everywhere and nowhere. That country has always been the land of heresiarchs rather than heretics. It seems easier to find there the bold speculator capable of giving birth to a new doctrine, than a multitude ready to adopt it, to run to desperate extremes, and risk life and limb in its vindication. It was thus that in the sixteenth century, the Italian reformers so soon overstepped the mark that their sober brethren of Germany and Switzerland were anxious to set for themselves; so that men like Paul Vergerio,

* Scharling, De Stedingis, Copenhagen, 1828.

Bernardino Ochino, the Socini, &c. &c., could find no rest at Zurich or Geneva any more than at Rome*; and Peter Martyr Vermigli had a narrow escape of being mobbed in England, where he had the ill-fortune to displease both the old and new churches, between which the country was yet wavering (A. D. 1550—1552), and where fanaticism, baffled of its prey, wreaked its blind rage against the remains of his wife, which were unburied and burnt at Oxford.

It is easy to account for a similar phenomenon in modern ages, by contrasting that natural keenness and boldness of individual intellect, (that "vain curiosity and insatiable desire of novelty," with which Calvin reproaches especially the Italians, attributing it to their "rarum acumen."†)—with the general prostration of the masses, the result not so much of the crushing weight of domestic and foreign tyranny as of native want of veneration, of the apathy, indolence, and frivolousness of a southern race.

§ 28. In the middle ages, at any rate, the despotic powers which could stifle religious opinions in blood were not yet solidly constituted, and orthodoxy established itself on the mere indifference of the Italians. We have already seen ‡ apostles of heresy, old women

* Mac Crie, History of the Reformation in Italy, chap. iv.

† Calvin. Oper. tom. viii. p. 510.

‡ *Antè*, § 7.

and monks, first propagating their doctrines beyond the Alps, in the eleventh century. Their tenets, and those of every sect which might happen to spring up any where, were matter of free discussion in the newly emancipated cities of Lombardy, during that and part of the following century. We hear of Waldenses, Petrobrusians, &c., making proselytes and founding congregations throughout the country. To these may be added the Passaggini — the name of whom, as well as that of Montani, some would derive from the highlands and passes of the Alps, where they were mostly to be met with; others, more plausibly, from πᾶς ἅγιοι (thorough saints) — the main subject of dissent among whom seems to have been that Anti-trinitarianism, towards which Italian theologians in all ages evinced a decided tendency.*

The Church of Rome had not obtained any very strong hold over the republics of Lombardy, until about the middle of the twelfth century, when gratitude for the countenance afforded by Alexander III. to their cause against Frederic Barbarossa, at-

* Bert (I Valdesi, p. 21.), on the testimony of Gilly's Waldensian researches, states that *Subalpini*, *Montani*, *Passagini*, and other similar denominations, were synonymous with *Vallesi*, or men of the valleys, the original appellation of the Waldenses. Comp. Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. vol. ii. p. 510. note; Bock. Hist. Anti-trinit. tom. ii. p. 418.

tached them to the interests of the Roman See. Even long after that period, many of the cities, especially those who followed the Ghibeline party, repeatedly found themselves in the ranks of opposition to the Popes, during the reign of Otho IV. and Frederic II. It was only after the death of the latter, in 1250, and the fall of his dreaded partisan, Ezzelino da Romano, in 1259, and the extinction of the House of Swabia, by the tragic fate of Manfred of Apulia, in 1266, and of Conradin in 1268; when a long interregnum, and a universal disorder in the Empire had given the upper hand to Guelphism throughout Italy — that the Popes, relying on the support of the Houses of Provence and France, began to lord it over the Lombard free States, and enforced their intolerant decrees by the means of their legates.

Strange to say, when persecution began in good earnest, and every government lent the Pope a willing hand towards the crushing of heresy, this was found to be rather the error of individuals than of the masses. Heterodoxy nowhere rose in open rebellion south of the Alps; and we are aware of no occurrence in which recourse need be had to the extremity of a crusade for the sake of faith in Italy, except in the very instance of Fra Dolcino and his followers; a circumstance which seemed to us to render that event worthy of particular attention.

It may be too early, at the present stage of our researches, to state, that to a very great extent it was persecution alone that created heresy; but there is no doubt that after the thorough establishment of the inquisition in Languedoc, "the number of real offenders did not, at first, by any means, come up to the expectation of the orthodox."*

§ 29. But in Italy the spirit of the age was equally unfavourable to the success of heresy, and to the adoption of violent measures to check it. The Italians had something worthier to occupy their minds than the mere squabbles of cavilling divines. They had just won the first battle of freedom ever fought in Europe since the pressure of northern invasions had substituted might for right. They were now striving to organise and govern themselves. Their energies were turned to trade and maritime enterprise; to legislation and the framing of their republican statutes. Much of that exuberance of youthful strength was also too fatally wasted in endless domestic and municipal quarrels. Still, in the midst of that stirring, sanguine, laborious existence, no room could be left for very earnest religious speculation. The Italians have been indifferent theologians in the best of times. But in

* Sismondi, Hist. des Franç., tome iv. p. 285.

this epoch especially, Bologna taught law, Salerno busied itself with physics; and such of the Italians as had a taste for scholastic divinity, such as Peter Lombard or Thomas Aquinas, must go to Paris or Oxford for their pursuits. Eager as they were to unbury the institutions of ancient Rome, so as to apply them to the necessities of public life, the Lombard lawgivers could not fail to find there that wise tolerant spirit which made the eternal city the refuge of all the gods of antiquity, the "sink of all earthly abominations."* Italian merchants had already long since made their way to the schismatic, Pagan, or Mahometan East. The Greek and the Turk walked unmolested among the motley crowds of Venice and Pisa. Saracen colonies flourished in Sicily, and were imported into Apulia, as loyal and industrious subjects, under imperial patronage. The same latitude was even extended to the Israelite, who had at this epoch to choose between "his ducats and his teeth" in England and elsewhere in the north, but who met with nothing but fair competition in Lombardy, where the money-lenders of Milan or Asti contented themselves with out-bidding him in his usurious transactions, out-Jewing the Jew in all European markets.

* Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. cap. xliv.

§ 30. Indeed, the liberty enjoyed by the Italians in religious matters was but too early pushed to the verge of dangerous licentiousness. A tendency to infidelity by the side of abject superstition, has been unfailingly evinced by the Italian mind at all times. We find it developing itself in the age of Innocent III. himself, when people could listen with a smile to the ribald anecdote of the "Three Rings," which their story-tellers had recently imported, together with crosses and relics, from the East; a story which Boccaccio borrowed from them one hundred years later, and a German philosopher did not disdain to dramatise in our own times*, and a story which could not take a more liberal view of all revelation, and makes the law of Jew, Christian, and Moslem of equal value in the eyes of a common father; when an emperor and his high chancellor, Frederic II. and Pier delle Vigne, were loudly accused by a pope,—not, perhaps, without good reason, of having denounced those "three notable impostors (baratatores), Moses, Christ, and Mahomet," who successively managed to "juggle the world;"† when

* Le Ciento Novelle Antike, Bologna, 1525, p. 30. Boccaccio, Decameron, Giorn. i. Nov. iii. Lessing's Nathan der Weise.

† Gregor. IX. Epist. in Raynald. Annal. Ecclesiast. ad ann. 1239.

the citizens of Florence familiarised themselves with the sight of such men as Farinata degli Uberti, Cavalcanti and his son, musing about their streets with downcast heads, busy, if report spoke truth, with the solution of that arduous problem, "If, peradventure, it could be satisfactorily made out that God was not."*

All this, be it observed, in the thirteenth century, at the time, that is, that Dominic of Gusman and Francis of Assisi inundated Europe with their cowled beggars (1208—1216); at the time that the "Sacro Volto" imprinted on the kerchief of St. Veronica was first exhibited in the west (1250), and, by a rare gift of ubiquity, was at the same time to be seen at Rome, at Milan, and at Jaen in Spain; at the time that the House of the Virgin was wafted by angels from Nazareth to the west, travelling by easy stages from Palestine to Dalmatia, and hence to various parts of the Roman states, till, after four years' wandering (1291—1295), it at least reached its ultimate destination at Loretto; at a time that a fit of flogging seized the people of Florence (1260), and hence infected Italy and Europe, and the bare backs of flagellants of both sexes, and the sound of their smart lashes, amazed the multitude; in a cen-

* Dante, Inf., canto x., and Boccaccio's Comment. to the same; also Decameron, Giorn. vi. Nov. ix.

tury to which we are probably indebted for the "Rosary and Crown of the Virgin Mary" (in 1244), for the *Stabat Mater* and *Salve Regina;* a century which invented the Corpus Domini, paraded, that is, the sacrament, with all the awful meaning the Catholic Church attached to it, as a raree-show about streets and market-places (1246—1311); a century in which the zeal for the wars of Palestine reached its climax in the crusade of children, which led so many innocent victims to death by drowning or life-long slavery at Algiers and Tunis (1204); and the rage for pilgrimages suggested the idea of the grand jubilee of Boniface VIII., in 1300, with its two millions of chaunting, ranting, barefooted palmers, crowding to Rome, eager to kiss off the marble toe of the apostle.

That daring spirit of inquiry, so strangely contrasting with the idolatry of the grovelling multitude, and which was fostered especially by the study of what they called Aristotelian philosophy, kept pace with the advance of learning and the revival of classical literature, till it reached its climax at the close of the fifteenth century, when such earnest men as Erasmus or Luther heard hardly anything but blasphemies at the court of Leo X., when "it was considered the mark of high breeding in Rome to call the principles of Christianity in question, and hardly

the principles of Christianity in question, and hardly a priest came back from saying mass without uttering outrageous words in denial of its reality." *

§ 31. It is in the very nature of things, therefore, that in so restless an age, and with so light-minded a people, heresy should spread very wide without sinking very deep. So long as governments allowed of an unbounded freedom of inquiry, there was hardly a sect unrepresented in Italy. They all had their own time, were stared at, laughed at, perhaps, a mere nine days' wonder. For a century and a half, the clergy could do no more than preach themselves hoarse against them. Of Galdino, Archbishop of Milan, for instance, we hear that he burst a blood-vessel in the vehemence of his onset against the Cathari: he was struck with sudden death on the pulpit, or immediately on his removal from it, and, as a martyr to his zeal, he was numbered among the Saints of the calendar. † This happened on the 17th of April of the very year of the battle of Legnano. It was not easy at the time to prevail on the Milanese, flushed with the certainty of that success which was to regenerate them as a nation, to allow any other means than arguments to be employed in the refutation of mere errors of opinion. Consequently, we hear from the

* Ranke's History of the Popes, chap. ii. § 3.

† Muratori, Annali d'Italia ad ann. 1176; Ughelli, Ital. Sacra, tom. iv. p. 159.

same historian, that the Cathari increased in number both at Milan itself and at Brescia, Modena, and elsewhere.*

§ 32. There was only one heresy which might be said to be of genuine Italian growth, and which therefore carried the whole country along with it; it was that of Arnold of Brescia, a man who filled the world with his name from 1134 to 1155.

Arnold could be a divine in the land of divinity. In France no man better knew how to beat theologians at their own weapons. He had stood by the side of Abailard during his conflict with St. Bernard, a more dreaded, uncompromising champion than his highly gifted, but somewhat too amiable, master himself. Arnold left him to retract his doctrines and make his peace with the monks as he best could. In Italy Arnold preached no other than a "political" —that is, a practical heresy. In early youth he had already battled with the Bishop of Brescia and other North-Italian prelates. Driven from home, he had sought refuge in the diocese of Constance, and taught the people of Zurich how to resist priestly encroachment, and constitute themselves on true liberal principles. But now he took up his ground in Rome itself, and there gave full development to his one idea,—that temporal power, wealth, and greatness were incompatible with the mission of a true Chris-

* Muratori, ad ann. 1192.

tian ministry. At no time has such a language been lost upon the children of Italy. From the days of Crescentius to those of Rienzi and Mazzini, a foe to the Papacy has ever been a hero to the Romans. But no man ever made his appearance at a more opportune moment, none was ever so near complete success as that high-souled Arnold of Brescia. The Romans had already stoned one of their popes, Lucius II., to death, in 1145; they by turns admitted on their own terms, or drove away, his successor, Eugene III. During the whole of the pontificate of this latter (1145—1153), Arnold was the soul of the emancipated people. He founded a free state in Rome, against which the pontiffs, by their unaided efforts, would never have prevailed. But the evil star of Italy brought about a good understanding between the English pope (Adrian IV.) and the Emperor Frederic I. The reconciliation between Church and State was unnatural, hollow, and ephemeral, but it was not the less fraught with the fate of Arnold and Rome. Blind to his own real interests, the Emperor thought he could gratify the Pope by the sacrifice of that "heretic" who had equally declared against both. He possessed himself of the person of Arnold, and even this was accomplished by treachery rather than force. Arnold was delivered to the priests, who, backed as they were by a whole Ger-

man host, did not venture to execute him in sight of the mutinous Romans, but hurried through their murderous job at daybreak, and were thus beforehand with the people already rising to their leader's rescue.*

§ 33. Arnold of Brescia had nevertheless given the tone to all heresy in Italy, and the "Arnoldists" figured among the most daring sectarians, especially in his native city.† All dissent there might be reduced to sheer anti-papism. A spirit of opposition to priestly tyranny was but too consonant with the democratic freedom established on the broadest basis throughout Lombardy and Tuscany. Even whilst the German bishops, as princes or electors, profited by the unsettled state of the empire to usurp sovereign power,—and we see them leading the armies of Germany in the crusade against the Stedingers,—those of Northern Italy either altogether abdicated, or were too happy to share their sway with consuls, podestas, and other magistrates more immediately emanating from popular election. In Rome alone, after the death of Arnold, the archpriest strove to keep his seat, and Innocent III., especially, substituted his own authority for that of the Senate, and accustomed

* Sismondi, Hist. des Républ. Italien., tom. i. p. 283.

† Muratori, Antiquitates Italiæ Medii Ævi, Dissertatio LX., tom. v. p. 90.

the Romans to the temporal government of the priests, towards the end of the 12th century. His successors found their seat any thing but firmly established nevertheless, and were again and again driven from Rome, either by the people or by the factious nobles of that city, till they had to quit it altogether during the long "captivity of the Church" at Avignon, in 1305.

Yet the authority of the pontiffs over the rest of Italy was decidedly in the ascendant. They had it in their power to persuade the republicans of the North, that the Church had titles to their gratitude, that it had always lent the most signal services to the national cause. It was not merely because Alexander III. had declared himself the chief and patron of the Lombard League in 1167, and Innocent III. had rallied its scattered members around him in 1197, and Gregory IX. had renewed its compact in 1226. But some of those popes, it is impossible to deny it, had the interests of the country truly at heart, and cared for something besides the aggrandisement of their own power. Innocent III., with all his hardness of heart, was a patriot, and as anxious to drive the "Barbarians" out of the country as ever Julius II. may be said to have been after him. When Frederic II. had, by his death, in 1250, relieved the Popes from all apprehension, Alexander IV. was not unmindful of his Italian

allies, now hard pressed by that last champion of Ghibelinism, Ezzelino III. da Romano, whose unheard of cruelties had spread dismay through the Venetian cities. His legates headed a crusade against the monster (1255—1259), and the country was thus rid of its worst terrors. But the Italians had to contend with a still greater enemy than either foreign or domestic tyranny: and that was their own frantic spirit of dissension and municipal jealousy. In the midst of their evil passions, the pontifical messengers stepped in as angels of heaven. Again and again the "Truce of God" averted the most dreadful calamities of civil bloodshed; and a Dominican monk had it in his power to bring the inhabitants of the twelve principal cities of Lombardy, on the plain of Paquara, in 1233, there to abjure their unnatural feuds and to join in a Christian embrace. It was on similar deeds of justice and humanity that a new Power was being founded at Rome. In the midst of their raving anarchy, in their utter, helpless disorganisation, the result of very strength and prosperity, the Italians were both unwilling to acknowledge a sovereign ruler, and unable to govern themselves without one. They turned to the Pope as a moderator and peace-maker: they submitted to a moral influence in the fond conceit that it could never be converted into political oppression. They flattered themselves they had found a

master who had it in his power to do good, and whom they could, however, always prevent from doing evil.

§ 34. As a return for patronage and arbitration, the popes exacted nothing, at first, but spiritual submission. They demanded from the free states of Italy what they had already obtained from the greatest potentates. At the suggestion of the bishop of Ferrara, a first decree against the heretics was issued by Otho IV. in 1210.* Two other edicts of the same nature were at different periods (1220, 1231) extorted from Frederic II. during those short intervals of truce, to which either inexperience in early youth, or necessity in later times, bowed him. It was the enforcement of these decrees that the popes earnestly solicited from the Lombard free cities: but even on that point they met with long, constant opposition, especially on the part of those cities which obeyed the influence of Ezzelino da Romano, a man who, independent of his strong Ghibeline prepossessions, would hardly, for the sake of pleasing the pope, inveigh against religious opinions, which his father, Ezzelino II., notwithstanding his title of "the Monk," and his life of ascetic retirement, was suspected of entertaining to his dying day.†

* Raynald, Annal. Ecclesiast. ad annos 1210, 1220, 1231.

† Rolandini, De Factis in Marchia Tarvis, lib. ii. cap. vi.; Rer. Ital. tom. viii. p. 186.; Francisci Pipini, Chronicon, cap. xxi.: Rer. Ital. tom. ix. p. 697.

§ 35. The first and second of those imperial edicts did not authorise the use of fire and sword to the extirpation of heresy. The penalty was limited to banishment and confiscation; and the Lombard government admitted even that with reluctance, and gave the law the most lenient interpretation. Upon the more urgent entreaties of Honorius III., in 1225, the cities of Modena, Brescia, and Rimini applied to misbelievers the rule followed by those Guelph and Ghibeline partisans in their political proscriptions; that is, they demolished the houses of the offenders, and involved their families in their ruin. Yet even so far the magistrates, and even the bishops, incurred the Pope's displeasure, in consequence of their softness of heart and lukewarmness in the cause of heaven. It was only after the close of the Albigensian war, when, as we have seen, the very skies seemed red with the blood of so many victims, that Gregory IX. obtained more cogent decrees from Frederic II. and Louis IX. of France, and extended to Lombardy the jurisdiction of those inquisitorial tribunals which were now terrorising the earth. The Inquisition itself was introduced by progressive stages. It was at first composed of one priest and three laymen (1229); but four years later, the Dominicans were exclusively trusted with its proceedings, and sat as accusers and judges, only applying to the "secular arm,"

at the last hour, for the execution of the sentence. Then it was, indeed, that the Paterini seemed to spring up as it were from the ground. Gregory IX. himself gave the first example, by burning a great many of them at Rome, in 1231: many more were by him thrown into dungeons, or submitted to the strictest discipline in the monasteries. In the year 1233, the flames rose high in the market-place of every Italian town: the important fact that nothing but fire could purge the earth of heresy was triumphantly established; and the people became familiar with the celebration of what the French called "sermons," the same horrid performance to which the Portuguese in later times gave their own name of "auto da fé." Then it was that a podestà of Milan,—Oldnado da Tresseno, a native of Lodi—could boastingly indite his famous inscription, under a monument which represented him on horseback, on the main entrance of the town hall, erected under his auspices:—

"Qui solium struxit, Catharos, ut debuit, uxit."

Muratori, who reports that line *, was more shocked at the barbarism which could thus murder the preterit of a Latin verb—uxit instead of ussit—than at the barbarity which seemed to exult at the

* Antiq. Italicæ, tom. v. p. 89, 90.

massacre of men whose guilt he who punished had no means to comprehend.

§ 36. The people, however, by that unerring instinct which so readily enlists its sympathies in behalf of all sufferers, did not so soon acquiesce in those odious measures of bigotry as prelates and magistrates had done. There is that in the nature of an Italian multitude, notwithstanding its southern fierceness and vindictiveness, which recoils from cold-blooded infliction of pain. All the might of Charles V., in the sixteenth century, failed to establish the "Spanish" inquisition in all its severity, in his provinces of Milan and Naples. In the same manner, two centuries before, the Papal legates, and the preaching friars or Dominicans, came into frequent collision with the Lombard people, not yet thoroughly convinced of the utter perverseness of the doctrines of those religious innovators.

The first champions of intolerance had fared but indifferently in other parts of Europe. One of Innocent III.'s legates in Languedoc, Pierre de Castelnau, had, on account of his unbearable arrogance, been stabbed at St. Gilles by one of the knights of Raymond VI., Count of Toulouse, in 1208; and his death, indeed, was the spark that kindled the great conflagration in Southern France. Another fanatic, the same who so ominously distinguished him-

self at the crusade against the Stedingers*, Conrad of Marburg, was, in spite of the support of his penitent, St. Elizabeth of Thuringia, and of all the potentates of Germany, murdered by some noblemen near Marburg, in 1233. But in Italy, out of three legates sent out by Gregory IX. on the same sanguinary errand, one—Roland of Cremona—was, with another monk, stoned to death by the populace at Piacenza in 1233; a second, Peter of Verona, fell by the hand of an assassin, hired, it is said, by the Cathari, near Barlassina, on the road from Milan to Como, in 1252.*

§ 37. Blind ferocity, however, was sure of success in the end. The taste of blood, we repeat it, creates bloodthirstiness. Persecution gave heresy an importance which it might otherwise never have acquired in the eyes of a heedless multitude. They began to think that there must be in those heretics more than met the eye. As, in the insane outcry against witchcraft in later times, there was hardly anything that might not be proved against the accused, even on his own confession. The subtle, harassing proceeding of those preaching friars, the maze of their suggestive questions, by which they practised on the ignorance, on the perplexity and

* *Antè*, § 26.

† Muratori, Ann. d'Italia, ad annos 1233–1252.

sheer terror of their victims,—those iniquitous tactics improved and refined upon, year after year, till they became an omnipotent engine of torture in themselves—and were, as such, applied to the worst purposes of remorseless statecraft, down almost to our own times,—finally the rack itself, the complicate ordeal of torments to which the very ingenuity of fiends could hardly have added,—all, all was contributing to render heresy a terrible reality in the people's eyes, even had it had no existence in itself. A shrinking horror seized the masses. They dreaded inquiry, and accepted without comment all the worst rumours that priestly malice could get up. The "heretic" was signalised by mere report, convicted on mere presumption.

§ 38. A fatal impression had gone abroad, that heresy was a subtle, invisible poison, escaping the attention of careless observers, and only to be detected by the application of such powerful tests as the inquisitors had at their command. Men of the most unblemished conduct, of the most rigid austerity and expansive charity, were found to have entertained the most damnable notions, sometimes with utter unconsciousness on their own part. Indeed, holiness of life afforded in itself dangerous ground for suspicion. Nothing more common than to find the purest virtue co-existent with unsoundness of belief.

§ 39. There died thus, in the year 1269, at Ferrara, a man named Armanno, or Hermann Pungilupus, who had lived in the practice of the most active Christian charity, and left the odour of sanctity behind him. He was magnificently entombed in the main church at Ferrara, and heaven seemed to bear witness to his election by the performance of signal miracles. The blind, the lame, and the sick of the palsy were made whole by mere contact with the hallowed marble of his tomb. Documents authenticating a great many of these facts, drawn up by notary public, signed and sealed by conspicuous citizens, by the canons of the cathedral, and the very bishop of the diocese, fill up seventeen columns in Muratori's Dissertation on Mediæval Heresy in Italy.* On such ample evidence the canonisation of Pungilupus would have followed as a matter of course, and the friends of his memory were already pressing forward their suit with the apostolical chamber, when, all at once, and after twenty years' success, it was found out that all the alleged portents were either the contrivance of secret partisans, or a delusion of the foul fiend; inasmuch as the said Hermann had once, in 1254, been traduced before the inquisition, on account of some errors which he had indeed pretended to abjure, but in which it was

* Muratori, Antiq. Ital., tom. v. p. 98–115.

now proved he had persevered to the last, secretly upholding and spreading the doctrines of the "Poor men of Lyons," and keeping up an active correspondence with other heretics of the deepest dye. The contradictory evidence of friends and foes, supported, in our judgment, by authorities of equal weight, was at last brought before the Papal court, under Boniface VIII., who, in 1300, uttered sentence against the memory of the dead, ordered his monument to be thrown open, and his relics consigned to those flames which the living man should never have been suffered to escape.

So far Muratori, who goes on quoting other instances of similar wolves walking about in sheep's clothing, practising not merely on the credulity of the people at large, but on the clergy also, and on the very bishops trusted with their charge.*

§ 40. This posthumous condemnation of men who had died, either in the very best terms, or after full reconciliation, with the Church, was becoming matter of frequent occurrence. It was applied to Amaury or Amalric of Chartres, in 1209, at a time in which, as we have said†, many of his followers, yet living, were doomed to mix their ashes with his. The errors of this Amaury, of his sect, and of David de Dinant, who rose to a considerable notoriety after

* Muratori, Antiq. Ital., tom. v. p. 96. † *Antè*, § 25.

him, consisted in a kind of pantheism, harmless enough in theory, but capable of dangerous application in practice. They shared some of the mystical opinions of the "Brethren and Sisters of the Free Spirit," who became numerous, in the fourteenth century, under the names of Beghards in Belgium and Germany, and Turlupins in France. Their tenets are explained at full length by Mosheim*, who does not hesitate to give all these sects an Italian origin. What, however, is more relevant to our present purpose, is, that these sectarians, or most of them, entertained peculiar expectations of the forthcoming "Kingdom of the Holy Ghost;" expectations which owed their rise to the true or supposed prophecies of an Italian, Joachim, Abbot of Flora, in Calabria, who taught that the world had successively been under the law of the Father and the Son, and announced a new era, which should take its name from the third person in the Trinity. His views about the Holy Ghost and the Trinity in general were, it would seem, not the most correct, since they underwent a solemn condemnation by a council held at the Lateran, under Innocent III., in 1215, as being infected with Arianism;"† but his

* Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 622. 628.

† Bock, Anti-trinitar. Hist., tom. ii. p. 122.; Mosheim, Eccl.

views respecting some great catastrophe in the Providential government of the world, and especially a "Purification of the Church by the sword," were found consonant with the feelings of the multitude, so unanimous in its detestation of the clergy, and circulated very freely, not merely among the mystics of the school of Amaury and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, but amongst all sorts of dissenters, and chiefly among a very extensive sect which had sprung out of the Franciscan order, almost at its foundation, who called themselves the "Spirituals," and went in Italy by the more familiar name of Fraticelli," or "humbler brethren," of an order which had aspired to the very ideal of humility.

§ 41. Any prediction fraught with ruin and confusion to the popes and priesthood must needs, at all times, have the greatest significance in Italy. From the time that mankind had been tremblingly awaiting the dissolution of the world, or the Millenium, at the close of the 10th century, their imagination had always been on the stretch, anticipating great universal convulsions. The promulgation of a new law, the issue of a third religious dispensation, or at least the creation of a new Church, of the true Church of God, was the theme of daily discourse. Many were

Hist., ii. 630.; F. Francisci Pipini, Chronicon, lib. i. cap. xv.; Rer. Italic. Script. tom. ix. p. 598.

the seers that foreshadowed, many the apostles that announced, the fulness of the times. And with God's messengers, God himself came at last; not the precursors, merely, but the very Messiahs were seen, walking upon the earth.

§ 42. Men beset with the Spirit of God were as easily found as men possessed with the Evil One. The crowd who attended the daily exorcism of incarnate fiends, might well fall prostrate before incarnate deities.

A Bohemian—or, as some would have it, an English—woman appeared, indeed, in the latter capacity at Milan. For several years she obtained credit to her assertions,—that the Holy Ghost had taken flesh and assumed human nature in her person. Her name was Wilhelmina; she gave herself out as the daughter of Constance, wife of Ottocar II., King of Bohemia. Her mother, she said, had received from the archangel Raphael the same intimation conveyed by Gabriel to Mary. As the Son was made flesh in Christ, so had the Spirit been made a sharer of humanity in her; that the work of Christ might be completed, and the redemption, which was partial in the Christian dispensation, should now be extended to the Jew, the Saracen, and the Gentile. She announced her own passion, death, and resurrection; promised her re-appearance before the Judgment day.

It is possible, indeed, — and there is the testimony of some historians to that effect, — that some notions of the emancipation of woman entered into her scheme: at any rate, a female Messiah could only be heralded to the world through the instrumentality of a female priesthood. Wilhelmina began by the ordination of a female pope, and made choice of a runaway nun, called Mayfreda, whom she appointed her chief apostle and vicegerent upon earth. It was for her to say mass at the sanctuary, which her mistress designed for herself at the monastery of Chiaravalle, about three miles from Milan. And the day was not far, when the same arch-priestess should, at the head of a female hierarchy, officiate in St. Peter's at Rome; when popes and cardinals should have filled the measure of wrath, and a new Church should rise on the ruins of the old.

In spite of her own predictions, Wilhelmina died quietly in her bed in 1281. She was, by her own directions, sumptuously buried at Chiaravalle, and her tomb became a shrine, not to her disciples merely, but to the populace at large; nor was it, till 1300, that the inquisitors brought to bear against her that lynx eye which had, exactly at the same epoch, seen through the devices of Hermann Pungilupus, and proceeded against her in the same summary manner. Her splendid tomb was also desecrated and destroyed,

and her ashes scattered to the winds. The Papessa Mayfredaa, with one of her principal disciples, Andrea Saramita, perished at the stake.*

§ 43. We have at length come to the end of our long enumeration of the principal errors that distracted Christianity in the middle ages, — errors, most of them, it will be perceived, exhibiting the stark madness rather than the impiety of mankind; and we have deemed it necessary to mention all or most of them, at least by name, because they seem to us, to some extent, all complicated with, and dependent upon, one another; so that a minute examination of any of them may necessitate frequent reference to the others.

It was precisely at this period, that is, towards the latter part of the 13th century, that one of these sects arose at Parma, and spread widely all over Italy and abroad. It was called the sect or order of the Apostles, and successively acknowledged as its chiefs, Gherardo Sagarelli, and Fra Dolcino.

* Muratori, Antiq. Ital., tom. v. p. 91—93.

CHAPTER II.

1. Sect of the Apostles.—Sagarelli.—2. His early Success.—3. Character of the Sect.—4. The Heretic and the Saint.—Sagarelli and Francis of Assisi.—5. Rise of Mendicant Orders.—6. Their Object.—7. Heretic and Orthodox Beggars.—8. Dominicans and Franciscans—their Origin—their Success.—9. Popularity of the Monks of St. Francis.—10. Their Dissensions.—Conventual and Spiritual Franciscans.—Fraticelli.—Tertiarii.—11. Franciscan Sects, Schisms, and Heresies.—12. Expectation of violent Reforms in the Church.—Joachim.—The Everlasting Gospel, and the Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel.—13. Sagarelli and the Franciscans.—14. Progress of the Sect.—Apostles in Spain, France, Germany, and England.—15. Vicissitudes of the Sect in Parma.—The Bishop of Parma.—The Popes.—Sagarelli's Execution.—16. Difficulty of ascertaining the extent of his Guilt.—His Duplicity.—Falsehood of the whole Sect—of all Heretics.—17. What is to be thought of their alleged Confessions.—Fatal power of the Inquisition.—18. First start of Fra Dolcino.—19. His early Career.—20. Margaret of Trent.—21. Dolcino's Vicissitudes.—22. His frequent Escapes.—23. His Character.—24. His Influence.—25. Difficulty of his Position.—State of Italy.—French Influence.—26. Dolcino flies to the Mountains.—27. State of the Alpine Districts.—28. Dolcino's Intentions.

§ 1. The sect of the Apostles or Apostolic Brethren had its beginning about the year 1260, at Parma.

Towards that epoch a youth applied for admission into a monastery of the Franciscan order in that city. Contemporary chronicles name him Gherardo Sagarelli, or Segarello, and describe him as a native of Alzano—probably Albazzano, a small market-town or village, away in the mountains, twenty miles

south of Parma. He was little known in the town; a layman, of low birth, illiterate, and an idiot. On the ground of this last infirmity, we are told, his suit was rejected by the Franciscan brethren.

Sagarelli was not, however, discouraged by a first rebuke: he lingered about the precincts of the convent, and in the church, where he would tarry as long as he was allowed, sitting or kneeling, wrapt in deep meditation. Before the altar of the Brotherhood of St. Francis a lamp hung; and over it a shade, upon which were represented the Twelve Apostles, in the garb that tradition or the fancy of a mediæval artist assigned to them. In his long hours of musing the half-witted enthusiast dwelt with eyes riveted on those figures; till, at last,—we know not after how many months or years,—a great thought seemed to have struck him, which soon manifested itself in his actions.

He turned all his attention to the imitation of that apostolic costume. He allowed his hair and beard to grow; discarded all manner of covering for the head; he went barefooted, or borrowed the soles or sandals of the Franciscans; he also girt his loins with the cord of that order; for the rest, he put on a frock or tunic after what he conceived to be the apostolic cut, and put over it a cloak or mantle which went over the shoulders, and was clasped over the breast. In

imitation of the primitive Christians he eschewed all colours but white: he made choice of the coarsest sack and sail-cloth for his habiliments; and gave himself as unkempt and dingy an appearance as ever anchorite of the Thebais gloried in.

The man was most likely a labourer, and lived by his handiwork: but he also owned a small house in Parma: this he sold, and putting his money in a leathern bag, he made his appearance on the market-square, habited in full costume, anxious to qualify himself for his mission. He stepped upon a high stone, the same from which the Podestà, or chief magistrate of the town, was wont to address the multitude, and hence opening his purse, and calling out to the idlers and rogues of the neighbouring lanes and alleys, he flung his little treasure in handfuls amongst them, crying: "Let such as have a wish for the dross pick it up!" There was an uproar and a scramble among the rabble. The scattered pieces were greedily snatched up by men, who squatted down on the very spot, and tossed up the coins for wager, enlivening their games with many a rude oath and ribald jeers at the donor.

§ 2. Having thus by this abnegation of all earthly goods, no less than by his outward apparel, made himself as like unto the Apostles as he deemed necessary, Sagarelli next aspired to bring himself to

a close resemblance with the Master himself of the Twelve. He had the ceremony of Circumcision performed upon him—conformably, perhaps, to a sect of the Passaggini, called the Circumcised, because they restored that amongst many other Jewish rites *; and wishing to be born again or regenerated, he laid himself in a cradle, had himself wrapped up in swaddling clothes, and suckled by a mad or idiotic woman.

At length he lifted up his voice: rambling about the streets, calling the people to repentance, announcing that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand: begging his bread for Christ's sake. He disdained to lay up provisions for the morrow, but ate what was given him, on the very spot, scrupulously sharing it with the humblest passer-by.

An Italian free town, at that period of the middle ages, was not altogether the fittest stage for that kind of exhibition. The citizens of Parma, busy at their work, allowed the cracked prophet to croak to his heart's content; throwing him a crust of bread from time to time, half in pity, half in derision. This went on for nearly three years. At last, about the year 1263, one Robert, who had been a servant, or lay-brother of the Franciscans, joined him. These two raised

* Muratori, Antiq. Ital., tom. v. p. 151.

their voices to so high a pitch; they showed themselves in such terrible earnest, that, before the end of that year, about thirty individuals, of the very dregs of the people, marched in their suite.

Their success at Parma might, perhaps, have gone no farther; but, aware that a prophet has no honour in his own country, they moved eastward into the territory of Modena and Romagna, and were seen in a more flourishing condition at Faenza. In this latter town they seem to have become so numerous, as to feel the want of organisation: and because Sagarelli was either too modest or else too incompetent to take the lead amongst them, they elected one Guido Putaggi, a native of Parma, to be the chief amongst them. It was, however, a contested election, and the minority set up another man, by name Matthew, against him. The order was thus distracted by schism at a very early epoch (1275); but the breach was healed up by Sagarelli himself, who now consented to take the supreme authority upon himself, and ruled over the order in peace and charity to the day of his death, in 1300.

§ 3. The tenor of life of these poor people could not have been more harmless. They promenaded the streets of the towns chaunting church-hymns, especially those in honour of the Virgin (the "Ave Maria," and "Salve Regina);" this latter was a

recent effusion of the Church: they recited the Creed of the Apostles, probably, with a view to prove their orthodoxy; for the rest they preached to those who would listen; and ate when people would give them to eat. Their enemies, however, rated them, that they should dare to style themselves apostolic, when they "neither said mass nor confessed, but strolled madly about, ogling the women and misleading such of them as would hear them, whom they associated to themselves as their sisters."

This, and all other statements respecting this Gherardo Sagarelli, are made, as we said, by bitter adversaries, and rest, therefore, on the most questionable authority. Almost all the particulars are supplied by one Salimbenus de Adam, one of the brethren of that very Franciscan convent which had rejected the advances of the young devotee.*

§ 4. This repulse, we are told, was grounded upon the symptoms of unsound mind exhibited by Sagarelli. Those monks, however, could not have forgotten that the very saint who had founded their order, about half a century before (1208), Francis of Assisi was, according to the irrefragable testimony

* Ap. Pegnam, in Comment. in Emerici Directorium Inquisitorum. Venice, 1595, p. 271, &c.; Mosheim, Ketzergeschichte, 2 vols. Helmstadt, 1748, vol. i. part. II.; Geschichte des Apostelordens, book I. § 3.

of his biographers and panegyrists, not only grossly ignorant, but labouring under an affection of the brain, brought about by the disorders and debauchery of his previous life; that he was "a man of vanity, a buffoon." Mental alienation has ever, in superstitious ages, been set down as a mark of religious "enlightenment." The new apostle, at any rate, started on the same terms as the saint of Assisi; that is, by the distribution of his property among the poor; with this difference, merely, that Sagarelli parted with what was indisputably his own, whilst Francis made ducks and drakes of his father's merchandise, a piece of impertinence with which the latter was so sore displeased that he had him shut up and flogged as a downright madman, and his townspeople hooted and pelted him with mud as a deranged person. The strange whim attributed to Sagarelli of making himself like unto a child by putting himself out to nurse is very near the acme of absurdity, indeed; but what are we to think of a saint like Francis, who stripped himself stark naked to clothe the poor, had himself publicly flogged as an abominable glutton for having partaken of a chicken; built up a stable like that in which our Saviour was born, with the ox, and the ass, and the hay; where he "bleated like a sheep, pronouncing the word Bethlehem, and licked his lips from very sweetness every

time he uttered the name of Jesus?" Sagarelli's wish to conform to the great Master's example by circumcision was scarcely so bold as that of Francis himself, who had himself carried about with the blood flowing from his hands and feet, on which, as well as on his side, he had scars or fungus-flesh formed so as to represent the five wounds of the Crucifix;—those five signs or stigmata which, the monks of Francis's order did not scruple to affirm, had been marked into the body of the saint by a seraph, if not by the Redeemer himself in that disguise, who had come down to him from heaven on the heights of Mount Alverno, where Francis had prepared himself for such an interview by a forty days' fast.*

§ 5. It is not without purpose that we have alluded to Francis of Assisi and the order founded by him. The rise and progress of the so-called Mendicant Fraternities, and especially of the Franciscans, at the commencement of the thirteenth century, is indissolubly connected with the subject on our hands. Sagarelli's apostles were little else than dissenting Franciscans.

A devout and sincere reverence for absolute

* Bonaventura, Vita St. Patris Francisci, cap. xiii.; Thomas Cellano, Vita St. Francisci, Act. SS. tom. ii. p. 685, &c.; Lucas Wadding, Annales Minorum, tom. viii., ix.; Helyot, Histoire des Ordres Monastiques, tom. vii. chap. i.

poverty, a literal compliance with the precepts of the Gospel, especially with respect to those words, "Provide neither gold nor silver," &c.,* had always been the test of all Christian holiness. The wealth of the Church, and the arrogance and corruption springing therefrom, was the eternal theme of reproach against her, and constituted her vulnerable side. The heretics of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Petrobrusians or Henricians, needed scarcely any verbal argument. They took the field clad in that very panoply of rags which was intended to be the uniform of all Christians. They all styled themselves "the Poor of the Lord." Henry walked barefooted, clad in the meanest attire, bearing a heavy cross; and Peter de Waldo, struck with the sudden death of a friend, in the midst of the joys of a genial banquet, went home, sold all he had, and made the poor partakers of his considerable patrimony. These were no new achievements; no new doctrines. They were the deeds of those "saints" whom the Church held out as objects of worship. The "poor men of Lyons," or poor men of any sect, thought the best homage to be paid to the memory of those holy men was—imitation; and in the consciousness of the rectitude of their views, they beheld

* Matthew, x. 10.

with wrath and disdain the pomp and luxury of the princely prelates and pontiffs of their time. They were a reproach to the Church, and spared her not their censure and upbraiding. They went past their priests with feelings akin to that mixture of pride and resentment with which the poor Methodist or Independent of our own times, on his way to his Ebenezer or Zion Chapel, may view the grand glittering chariot wafting my lord bishop to his splendid cathedral, and splashing the poor dissenter with the mud from its wheels, even if he escapes being trodden under the horses' hoofs — my lord bishop, who five minutes later will be reading his own condemnation in every line of the sermon on the mount.

§ 6. The Church of the middle ages was aware of the glaring inconsistency. She could not, would not, mend her ways truly; but she strove to moderate, to counteract an evil which admitted of no radical cure. She enlisted the votaries of poverty in her own ranks. Against sectarian enthusiasm she set up monastic fanaticism.

The monks were to be "the poor of the Pope." Poverty was with most of them the first of sacred vows. Yet, somehow the holiest engagements had been invariably set aside, the strictest rule tampered with and evaded; the intentions of all archimandrites shamelessly frustrated. Vain were the example

and prescription of Benedict of Norcia, in the sixth century, vain the repeated reforms of Clugny, Citeaux, and Clairvaux in the eleventh and twelfth. White, brown or black, all friars were alike: they started fair enough; but when, like the Cistertians in the twelfth century, they could boast of eighteen hundred religious houses for monks, and fourteen hundred for women*, they felt all the plenitude of their power and insisted upon the enjoyment of its fruits. They began as beggars, ended as princes; they went to the very height of absurdity in their aristocratic exclusiveness: there were brotherhoods every member of which must prove noble descent of at least two hundred years; sisterhoods to which none were admitted but those who could show "their four quarters" on the side of both parents.†

It was to little purpose that some of the brethren were confined to the barren solitudes of the Alpine passes, at La Novalaise, or on Mount St. Bernard, or were secreted among the leafy God-haunted recesses of the Apennines, at Camaldoli or Vallombrosa: in vain were they bound to rules of perpetual silence, or left to solace themselves with the daily task of digging their own graves. All monks had a down-

* Michelet, Histoire de France, livre iv. chap. vii.

† Ibid. livre iv.

ward tendency; somehow or other they soon found their way to the plains; they settled on the fat of the land; on it they wallowed, a swinish herd, after the lapse of one or two generations.

The immense stir created by the thousand and one sects of dissenters towards the latter part of the twelfth century, rendered the continuance of such a state of things an utter impossibility: and Innocent III., who had at the Council of Lateran, in 1215, forbidden the erection of new "Religions," that is, monastic orders*, was, however, obliged to modify, if not to rescind, his own decree, by countenancing the formation of several fraternities, which received the formal sanction of his successors.† He, however, only admitted of "monks that were monks,"—that would go begging for the Pope's sake. All were distinguished by the name of "Mendicants," and the principal of them were the "Preaching Friars" or Dominicans, and the "Minor Friars" or Franciscans.

§ 7. Their aim and office was sufficiently obvious. Dominic himself, on his first appearance in the South of France, in the suite of the Bishop of Osma, had made the Cistertian monks aware that "they did not go to work in the right way, if their object was the conversion of heretics." He bade them alight from

* Harduin, Concilia, tom. vii. p. 31.

† Under Honorius IV., in 1216 and 1213.

their richly-caparisoned mules, to lay aside their fine clothes, and, in short, beat the Albigensian doctors at their own weapons, by as strict a practice of the precepts of the Gospel as the latter "affected." Another earnest believer, like Dominic, also a native of Spain, by name Durando d'Huesca, who had been one of the Waldenses, proposed to institute a brotherhood of "poor Catholics," with whom the "poor men of Lyons," would, he doubted not, willingly associate. The good man, however, imitated the "apparent" virtues of the Waldenses so well, that he was suspected of a relapse into their errors, and a stop was put to his conciliatory mission.*

At any rate, however, it was everywhere "Heresy teaching orthodoxy the way that it should go." Francis of Assisi himself, though a native of Italy, spent the best part of his youth in the South of France; so that, indeed, on his return home, he could hardly speak anything else than French; hence the name Franciscus given him by his countrymen instead of his baptismal appellation of Giovanni Bernardone. We suspect that he picked up something besides the idiom of that country of his early training. That he had been edified by the poverty of the Waldenses and other sects, and that some of their notions were

* Gesta Innocentii, iii. lib. xi. cap. 196.

running through his mind, when he at last stepped before Innocent III., in 1208, and offered—as that more than half-Franciscan Dante beautifully expressed it,—to wed that real Bride of Christ, who

> ——— "bereaved
> Of her First Husband, slighted and obscure,
> Thousand and hundred years, and more, remained
> Without a single suitor, till he came."*

§ 8. It is perhaps not unimportant to observe that Rome and Italy had, to a great extent, those monkish beggars forced upon them. The Church of Rome was then, as well as at all times, so utterly destitute of "grace," as not only to be unable to originate any measure for her own good, but even to hesitate in taking advantage of such instruments as Providence raised up in her behalf. Innocent III. and his cardinals were at first only startled at the fiery zeal of the Spanish Dominic, and all but disgusted at the vulgar antics of the half-Gallicised Francis.† In the same manner, three centuries later, another fanatic, also from Spain, met with very equivocal sympathy at the court of Paul III. And the permission to enlist the formidable army of the Jesuits was almost

* "Questa, privata del primo marito,
Mille e cent' anni e più dispetta e scura,
Sino a costui si stette senza invito.
DANTE, *Paradiso*, canto xi. Cary's Trans.

† Michelet, Hist. de France, livre iv. chap. viii.

extorted from the bewildered and half-reluctant pontiff.*

Nor were the people of Italy the best material for those mendicant enthusiasts to work upon, at least, on their first start. Dominic, indeed, sought his recruits among the hot-headed natives of Southern France; hot-headed by nature, and now kept in a state of preternatural ferment by the bloody scenes of the wars of Languedoc. Francis, who tried his fortune in Italy, met, at first, with nothing but contumely among his countrymen of Umbria. As if to bear us out in the parallel which we have drawn between him and Sagarelli, he, too, was allowed to preach for years, before a single person—and that a poor idiot of Assisi—could be prevailed upon to join him in 1108, and in 1210 he had but eleven followers.

The wonder-working seed was no less sown. The Roman prelates were too good politicians not to see, after a moment's reflection, all they could expect from those madmen's services; and the people felt, almost instinctively, that they had found men after their own heart. Only nine years later, five thousand Franciscans, all Italians, attended the general chapter of the order; and the Dominicans, on their side, had so prospered on the same soil, that

* Ranke, Hist. of the Popes, book II. § 4.

the number of their communities in a single Italian province, such as Tuscany or Lombardy, equalled that of the same establishments in any of the great European monarchies.* This, perhaps, not so much owing to great proneness on the part of the Italians to plunge deeply into any new madness as soon as it has received the sanction of fashion, as to the well-being and great means of those Lombard and Tuscan cities, which enabled them to provide for the endowment of religious no less than of all other civil or social institutions.

The admiration and idolatry both of the multitude and of the great for these shavelings, who had been sent out to do "the begging work of the Church," exceeded all bounds. In less than half a century they alone were the Church. All other places of worship were deserted; they alone confessed and administered the sacraments; their preachers alone were sure of crowded audiences. Popes hardly chose their messengers—monarchs their councillors,—anywhere else.† Princes and nobles, men of valour or genius, St. Louis, Blanche of Castile, Dante, Boccaccio, a thousand persons of equal note, sued for the privi-

* In 1278, the Dominicans had 417 cloisters: 32 in Tuscany; 46 in Lombardy; 35 in Spain; 40 in England; 52 in France; 53 in Germany, &c.

† Matthew Paris, Historia Major, p. 634. seq.; and at the years 1236, 1239, pp. 354. 465. 607.

lege of wearing the habit, at least, as lay brethren or sisters, of one of these orders. Hardly a Christian died without having his body wrapped in some sordid Dominican or Franciscan frock, under conviction that he could wear no better comforter in the last hour of agony; confident that St. Peter would hardly think of shutting the gate of Paradise in the face of any one who presented himself under covering of that privileged gear.

"They all,
Dying put on the weeds of Dominic,
Or as Franciscans hoped to pass disguised."

The main object and chief boast of both these and other orders of the same period, was in their vow of absolute poverty; but the efficiency of the Dominicans was soon directed to other purposes. They became the "Preaching Friars," and were sent to convert the enemies of the faith, and soon sat in judgment against those misbelievers they were unable to convince. They were trusted with the management of the Inquisition; constituted, that is, into a vast commission *De hæretico comburendo.*

§ 9. The Franciscans made poverty more exclusively their business; they monopolised it. All previous orders had made the vow of poverty personal, allowing, however, the whole brotherhood the possession of such estates and revenues as they deemed sufficient for their maintenance. But Francis inter-

dicted both individual and collective possession. "Let them go a begging," *vadant pro eleemosynas*, were the words of the rule.* His disciples were to have neither house nor home; they could lay no claim to the very frock they wore, to the mass-book they read, to the basket in which they received the bread that charity awarded them. Like the cynic of old, they were to throw off their wooden bowl so soon as experience taught them that they could drink water with the hollow of their hand.

The Dominicans had it in their power to inspire terror; but the Franciscans alone soon were the darlings of the multitude. No long time elapsed ere the popes charged them with the sale of indulgences, and the extreme liberality with which they dealt out God's pardon made these pedlars most welcome amongst a generation that had in all probability not a little to compound for.

§ 10. Excessive popularity could hardly fail to render them insolent and overbearing. Independent of the bishops and of all other ecclesiastical jurisdiction, at war with all the rest of the clergy, with all other monks, with their mendicant brethren especially, and with none more bitterly than the Dominicans, —whom they affected to call "Fratres majores," to

* Rule of St. Francis, cap. vi.

enhance the more perfect lowliness of the "Minores" —these cowled intriguers caused the Church and its head quite as much trouble as would counterbalance any good that might be expected from them. Nor was their hand only raised against every priest or monk, and every priest or monk's against them; for more than two centuries the most violent dissensions raged in their own bosom; and their annals, compiled by the Irish Lucas Wadding, one of their order, fill up eighteen folio volumes, with little more than their schisms and heresies, their factions and secessions.*

The chief subject of dispute rested precisely on the observance of their rule, especially on the very score of that "sublime" poverty, in the name of which, in expectation of the kingdom of heaven, they claimed little less than the empire of the earth.† Even during the lifetime of their founder, at the time of his mission to Egypt, in 1219, the deputy-general Elias, trusted by him with the charge of the fraternity, had suffered some abuses to creep in, and Francis, on his return, had no slight trouble in bringing back his disciples to their original discipline. But after the death of the saint (in the year 1226,

* Edit. of Rome, 1731.

† "Illa celsitudo altissimæ paupertatis, quæ vos fratres meos hæredes et reges regni cœlorum instituit."—Rule of Francis, cap. vi.

the 44th of his age), not only did the monks depart from the most irksome precepts of their master, but obtained from Gregory IX., in 1231, what was called an "interpretation," that is, relaxation of the rule. Similar, more or less convenient, constructions were put by almost every succeeding pontiff on the inexorable letter of the text; and it came to this at last that the monks were allowed "the simple use of things necessary," whilst the right of property, the legal possession and ownership, should belong to St. Peter, that is, to the pope himself. This last clause was abandoned in later times, and by dint of "explanations," of those words "free use" and "necessary things," these "thorough beggars" came in the end to be no worse off than the fattest of their brethren.

This flagrant deviation of the institution from its original aim could not, however, be effected without strong opposition. Some of the brethren, and these originally the most honest and conscientious, rebelled against the papal decision; and from its very foundation there was thus a split in the order, which only widened with time, and gave rise at last to two distinct factions,—that of the "Conventual" Franciscans, who abided by each successive decree of either pope, or council, or chapter of their order; and the Zealous or Spiritual Franciscans, who persisted in a

literal compliance with the fundamental principles of their institutions, and did so, in frequent instances, in sheer defiance both of their own "generals," and of the head itself of the Church. These latter were sometimes called "Fraterculi" or "Fraticelli," a title which ought properly to have belonged to the whole order, since it was only another termination of their original appellation of "Fratres Minores," but which the Spirituals fondly usurped for themselves, as expressive of the greater perfection of their lives; and which their adversaries, the Conventuals, allowed them by way of contempt.*

Besides the brethren who bore his own name, and the Clarissian nuns, or Sisters of St. Clara, instituted, the first in 1208—1216, the latter in 1212, St. Francis had also, in 1224, established a third order, into which any lay person could enter, by merely conforming to certain religious practices, without otherwise quitting the world, their family, property, or avocation. These lay-associates were called "Tertiarii," or brethren and sisters of the Third Order, and went also by the name of "Penitentiary brethren." As we have seen, there was hardly a man, from the prince to the boor, who was not, at some time or other of his life, seized with a whim to don

* Mosheim, Ecclesiast. Hist., vol. ii p. 674, &c.

the sackcloth or gird on the cord—the distinctive marks that qualified a follower of the saint.

These Tertiarii embraced, of course, some of them the views of the Conventuals, some of the Spirituals, but, as these latter, notwithstanding their mad vagaries, so often verging on sheer blasphemy and impiety, were, after all, the true Franciscans; as they followed the Rule, the whole Rule, and nothing but the Rule,—they of course came in for the largest share of the honour awarded by mankind to the ideas of their founder, and had a far greater suite among the brethren of the Third Order, who viewed the "Beauties of Beggary" only in theory, whilst on themselves the Rule sat easy enough.

These monkish squabbles were for some time carried on within the bosom of the community; now the one party, now the other, obtaining the upper hand, and forcing its opponents to conformity with its peculiar views; but not unfrequently also, they came to open rupture; the worsted party went asunder, or was cast out of the fraternity, and filled the world with its grievances.

§ 11. It soon became evident, nevertheless, that the Lax or Conventual party would secure a permanent advantage: it put itself under the patronage of the Court of Rome, and was consequently entitled to the appellation of orthodox. The other party, on

the contrary, that of the Spirituals, and especially those amongst them who were known as Fraticelli (little imps of monks), had to withstand the displeasure of the whole Church, and was charged with heresy, not only on account of its peculiár views respecting the perfection of the Rule, which was held as little else than an improvement on the Gospel and of the interpretation of the poverty professed by Christ and the Apostles—but also in consequence of Manichæan and other unsound doctrines, so readily, so invariably imputed to any person who presumed to be at variance with the Church of Rome.

These poor Fraticelli were therefore, from sheer necessity, driven into the ranks of opposition. They were "licensed" beggars, from whom the Papal badge had been taken. Conformity of views, no less than community of interests, made them seek their allies among those swarms of Beghards or Beguins, among those "Apostles," who professed to follow the letter of the Gospel, especially by a state of total destitution, squalor, and wretchedness. The regular brethren themselves were, perhaps, sufficiently well informed and moderate to avoid the worst errors of their new associates; they were at least distinguishable by their habit, and *might* be closely watched in case of need, and taken to task. But all the ignorant, fanatic, loose rabble of the Tertiarii,

bound by no vow, were at liberty to consort with every description of dissenters, and many of them, no doubt, went to swell the ranks of the worst enemies of Rome.

§ 12. At the time that Sagarelli applied for admission into the convent at Parma, the Lax or Conventual party had obtained a signal success, and the Spirituals, now mustering, especially in Southern France, under the famous Peter John Oliva, had thrown off all allegiance, and rose in open rebellion against the Church of Rome, upon which they lavished that commonplace and yet ever-galling name of the "Scarlet Lady of Babylon."* We have already alluded† to the prophecies of that gifted Joachim, Abbot of Corazzo, and afterwards of Flora in Calabria, founder of several convents. The soothsayer had died long since (he lived from 1130 to 1202); but his predictions had now obtained a wide circulation, and assumed a greater significance from extraneous circumstances. A book, attributed to him, and entitled "The Everlasting Gospel," had lately been published (1254), together with another work professing to be "An Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel," which had also, without good ground, been attributed to John of Parma, one of the few "Generals" of the Franciscan order who

* Wadding, Annales Minorum, tom. v. p. 51.

† *Antè*, chap. i. § 40.

ever embraced the views of the Zealous or Spiritual party, but which might more probably be traced to one Gherard, a friend and follower of his, possibly also from Parma (that town has always been famous for heretics and antipopes) who had warmly embraced the views attributed to the abbot Joachim, and lay for more than eighteen years in a dungeon rather than abandon them.*

The substance of these books, whoever the authors really were, was simply, that the Gospel of Christ was merely intended for a transitory purpose; that it was now worn out, and another should be substituted in its stead. The book of Joachim stated that the world had hitherto gone through two imperfect ages or dispensations; that the Father and the Son had successively held their sway; but that the era of the Spirit was now at hand — the era of love and charity, of true holiness and perfection. The prophecy was to be fulfilled at a stated time, namely, six years after its promulgation, or about the year 1260, — the reader should not forget that this date coincides with the beginning of Sagarelli's apostolate, — and was to be effected by barefooted brethren, hallowed by the practice of true apostolical poverty and humility. This epoch was fraught with utter ruin to the Pope, to his whole hierarchy, to all priests and monks

* Mosheim, Ecclesiast. Hist., vol. ii. p. 569.; and Geschichte des Apostelordens, note i.

without exception. These tracts, which were most undoubtedly the work of some Franciscan, and not unlikely of some of the schismatic Fraticelli, gave rise to the most insane, tumultuous expectations. Every set of vagrants who gave sanctity a preference over industry as a means of making their livelihood, —men who deemed themselves exempt from that very first and most just and provident of God's laws, that of "earning our bread in the sweat of our brow," — by far the most damnable of all heresies in our own estimation, — every one of those sects, we repeat, conceived itself chosen and set apart to work out the designs of Providence, to usher in the new era of Joachim, to wreak heaven's vengeance on that Church which had done so much towards rendering Christ's Gospel a dead letter.

§ 13. Nothing, therefore, may be said to have more strongly contributed to spread and strengthen heresy, than that very Franciscan institution, which the founder had intended as the main prop of the Papacy, on which he had enjoined the blindest obedience to the Roman see. The seceding mendicants were amongst the most violent of those various sectarians to whom the Germans applied the vague but most appropriate name of Beghards or beggars.

We have already alluded to Mosheim's definition

of that word*, which leaves nothing to wish for. He derives it from the old German word beggen or beggeren, now begehren, to long for, or to crave. It was used at first to designate both those who prayed earnestly to God, and those who asked for alms in God's name,—hard-praying men,—persons of extraordinary piety or devotion, whether sincere or affected, and hard beggars, living at the expense of far better men than themselves. To the first denomination might belong the Waldenses, the Belgian Beguins, all those who chose to be poor but laborious; to the latter the "Brethren of the Free Spirit," Turlupins, Apostles, and so many other madmen or rascals who followed no occupation, under the very good pretence that "they had God's work to do."

There is no doubt, in our mind, but Sagarelli approached the convent of the Franciscans under the influence of the views of the Fraticelli or Spirituals. He was, in all probability, a single-minded man, and would not admit of two interpretations of the same words. He spoke to the Franciscans in the name of Francis; and as he stood firm against all sophistry, nothing more natural than that the monks

* Mosheim, Eccl. Hist., vol. ii. p. 578., note. See also *antè*, chap. i. § 40.

should set him down as an obstinate fool, an illiterate idiot.

This seems all the more probable, as the first person who ever joined him in his apostolate was that Robert whom Salimbenus de Adam describes as having been a servant of the Minor Brethren.* The mere mention of domestic service amongst the disciples of St. Francis is sufficiently striking. That Robert, however, in all probability, was merely one of those poor lay brethren employed in menial offices in all monastic establishments. He had, perhaps, entered the order with different views and intentions, and was inclined to grumble at the odd notions of fraternal equality entertained by his patrons: nothing more natural, in that case, than that he should turn from them in a huff, and go over to the ranter in the streets, whose beggary was at least tangible, and therefore came up to his idea of a true Franciscan.

That Sagarelli started nothing very new, and, openly at least, professed nothing that his enemies could lay hold of, may result from the fact, that for a term of twenty years the sect met with no serious check or hindrance. They were looked upon as mere "opposition beggars," as one of the many new brotherhoods of "saints," under a variety of hoods,

* Ap. Pegnam, in Eymeric, p. 271.

cowls, cloaks, and other guises, to which the secession of the strictest Franciscans successively gave rise. As such they might of course be presumed to be in hostility with the Church; but this latter did not yet deem it expedient to proceed to the worst extremities against them. These were no longer the days of Innocent III. or Gregory IX.; men, with all their faults of harshness and intemperance, who had the interests of religion, such as they understood it, truly at heart, and who were earnestly bent on the preservation of unity of faith. The popes who reigned during the latter part of the thirteenth century, such men as Nicholas III. and Nicholas IV., Martin IV., &c., were worldlings, all intent upon the final success of the Guelph party, meddling in all the feuds of the lawless Roman barons, and only anxious to promote the advantage of their Orsini or Colonna families. They were the very men who introduced or improved that shameless favouritism that went by the name of "Papal Nepotism." Heresy of all kind had, therefore, a respite for a few years; and it was precisely at this epoch (1260—1280) that we have seen such deep deceivers as Hermann Pungilupus at Ferrara, or Wilhelmina at Milan, practising on popular credulity with utter impunity.*

* See *antè*, chap. i. § 39. and 52.

§ 14. Together with these, Sagarelli also managed to thrive. The Order of the Apostles is said, even at this early epoch, to have spread abroad; not only in most parts of Lombardy, but even in Germany, England, and Spain. These assertions must, however, be taken with some discrimination. The mere appellation of Apostles, or Apostolic brethren, was no novelty. We have seen * some of these in Burgundy, and other parts of France, in the previous century. Some of those "brethren of the Free Spirit," who were named "Schwestrones," or Sisterers, in Germany, because they went about accompanied by women called by them Sisters, had also, in very many points, affinity with our sectarians. Some "Apostles" were, in 1287, traduced before a council held at Wurtzburg, under Rudolf of Habsburg; when a decree was issued by which they were forbidden to preach and to beg, and the people were warned against encouraging such vagabonds by their liberalities of meat and drink.† In Germany these Apostles were called "Lekker," an old word, equivalent to the English "lecherous," on account of the loose morals attributed to them, as invariably to all men of the same class. Another set of pseudo-Apostles was also

* *Antè*, chap. i. §§ 17. 22.

† Harduini, Concilia, tom. vii. p. 1141.

proscribed in England, at a council held at Chichester, in 1289*: but Mosheim thinks† these could have no connexion with Sagarelli's brethren, inasmuch as the English Apostles shaved their heads, preached in churches, and admitted confession, practices all these wholly at variance with those of the Italian Apostles: it is more than probable, nevertheless, that all these sects sprung up in obedience to the same leading idea,—that is, a conformation to the example of apostolic life,—and assumed different habits and practices, according to the peculiar construction each of them put on the words of the New Testament. But at a much later period (1300), some Apostles, tracing their origin to the school of Sagarelli at Parma, seem to have been found in Spain and Southern France: one Richard, a native of Alessandria, had travelled into those regions, and had been especially successful in Gallicia. All this, however, rests wholly on the testimony of Peter of Lugo, one of the Apostles, who was apprehended and brought before the Inquisition at Toulouse in 1320, and in his recantation stated, amongst other things, that he had been perverted by that same Richard of Alessandria twenty years before.‡

* Wilkins, Concilia Magnæ Britann. tom. ii. p. 173.

† Mosheim, Geschichte des Apostelordens, book i. § ix.

‡ Limborch, Philip, Hist. Inquisitionis, Liber Sententiarum, p. 361.: Amsterdam, 1692, fol.

§ 15. In Lombardy, however, the disciples of Sagarelli may have met with decided success ere 1280, the first epoch in which they began to attract the attention of their foes.

The Bishop of Parma, from 1258 to 1295, was Obizzo Sanvitale, a son of Margarita de Fieschi, sister of Innocent IV. and aunt of Adrian V. Obizzo, no less than his elder brother Alberto, who occupied the same see from 1244 to 1257, had been somewhat forced upon the diocese by the interest of the Fieschi family, at that time all-powerful at Rome.* The Sanvitale, one of the most conspicuous families of Parma, were then rising into distinction: they have in all ages evinced great liberality and benevolence of disposition; several of that name have played a leading part in all the national movements of recent times. The Bishop Obizzo, like so many of the prelates of that epoch, was rather a statesman than a priest: he meddled in the quarrels of Guelphs and Ghibelines, till he managed, in 1295, to get himself and family violently driven from Parma. A very strict care of the flock could not be expected from such a shepherd: and the mastiffs of the Inquisition were for a long period (1279—1287) providentially put out of the way. By one of those tumultuous

* Litta, Famiglie Celebri di Italia, Sanvitale di Parma.

scenes frequent in the Italian cities at that age, the people of Parma had fallen upon those misnamed Preaching Friars, as they were roasting one of their victims (a woman, and the disciple of another woman); they had fallen on them with curses and hard blows, had killed one and wounded several of them, and had even burst into their house, and carried ravage and destruction every where.* The city, of course, was put under the interdict, and made to sue for a reconciliation with and re-admission of those cowled fiends; but that was matter for several years' negotiation, and in the interval heresy was allowed to run riot. The bishop, however, in 1280, heard, for the first time, that Sagarelli had been heard uttering invectives against the Holy Church. He had him immediately apprehended, and, after some examination coming to the conclusion that the man was no worse than a poor demented visionary, released him from durance, and allowed him the run of his own episcopal palace, where he was sent to keep company with the court fools and other idlers and parasites of that princely establishment.†

In this kind of easy seclusion the Apostle continued for six years. In 1286, however, not improbably

* Chronicon Parmense, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ix. p. 792–811. Memoriale Potestatum Regiensium, Rer. Ital. tom. viii. p. 1146.

† Salimbenus de Adam. ap Pegnam. p. 171.

because the inquisitors were then urged to return, and the bishop shrunk from the responsibility of abetting a misbeliever, Sagarelli was deemed unworthy of the shelter hitherto enjoyed, and banished from the town and diocese under Obizzo's jurisdiction. Little or nothing is known of his sayings and doings in the land of exile; but, in 1294, he appears to have broken the ban, and to have clandestinely come back to his native state. He was again brought before the bishop, who condemned him to perpetual imprisonment. Even then he was dealt with with singular favour and indulgence; as four of his disciples, two men and two women, all coming under the denomination of Apostles, were burnt alive, probably by the Dominicans, at the same juncture.*

In the year 1300, Sagarelli was once more in trouble. That was, we may remember†, a terrible year — the year of the Jubilee, in which the Church seemed to rake up all heretic grievances, sparing neither the quick nor the dead, digging up the graves of Pungilupus and Wilhelmina, and putting to death all who bore witness to their election. It is not quite clear whether the unfortunate Apostle had broken loose from confinement, and had afterwards once more

* Chronic. Parmens. p. 826.

† *Antè*, chap. i. §§ 39. 52.

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fallen into his enemies' hands, or if these thought proper to revise his sentence, merely with a view to make an example of him, and treat the people of Parma to one of their horrid feasts: but the fact is, that he was submitted to a more severe interrogatory by Father Manfred, the Grand Inquisitor at Parma, who so plied him with the instruments of his terrible craft, as to convict him of a relapse into errors formerly abjured, and thus, as an impenitent and perjured heretic, to "deliver him over to the secular arm,"—the technical phrase for sending a wretch to the stake.*

This happened on the 18th of July, 1300; and Father Manfred, now fully on the scent of these Apostolical abominations, allowed himself no rest till, by fire and the sword, and a variety of other punishments, he had cleared the town and country of the sect, and "purged the air" of their pestilential doctrines.†

Further particulars about Sagarelli's execution occur in the Chronicle of a contemporary‡, a Domi-

* See the Appendix at the end of this volume: A. Sagarelli's son.

† Eymeric, Directorium Inquisitorum, p. 268. Additamentum ad Historiam F. Dulcini, Muratori, Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ix. p. 450.

‡ Fr. Jacobi ab Aquis, Chronicon Imaginis Mundi, in Monument. Hist. Patriæ (*Sabaudiæ*) tom. iii. p. 1607.

nican, and a man of considerable learning for his age. He informs us that a great heresy had broken out at Parma, and that its sectarians held a very bold irreverent language with respect to the Christian faith; that one of these, Gherardo Sagarelli, and one of his associates, who was under the control of the Evil One, were led to the stake. "Being in the fire," says the chronicler, "he called out 'Help, Asmodeus!' and forthwith the flames were extinguished. This happened three times. At length the Inquisitor bethought himself of bringing the 'Body of Jesus Christ' under his cloak, to the place of execution; when the heretic was once more placed on the burning pile, and this set on fire. The heretic again cried out 'Asmodeus, to the rescue!' But the demons were heard in the air, answering, 'Alas! we cannot; for He who is now come forward is stronger than we are.' And thus the heretic was consumed." The people of Parma, we learn further, were, as usual, roused into fury by this atrocious sight. They broke into the house of the Inquisition, and did great damage there,—a damage for which the city afterwards, by the Pope's order, had to make ample amends.

What the real errors and other heinous offences that brought these unfortunate wretches to their doom could be, it is not yet in our power to declare;

for we cannot take the evidence of their enemies against them,—not at least without sifting and contrasting it with itself.

Till 1280, that is, for at least twenty years, they seem to have committed themselves to no impeachable act. Only six years later, when the town was bent upon propitiating the court of Rome and the Dominicans, it seems that some ultra-zealous person called the attention of Pope Honorius IV. upon their doings. In his bull of the 11th of March, 1286, that pontiff, referring to an enactment of his predecessor, Gregory X., who, at the Council of Lyons, in 1274, had forbidden all religious brotherhoods not belonging to the orders approved by the Church, reminds his bishops and other ecclesiastical authorities that a sect called "of the Apostles" had now sprung up, which did not appertain to any of the acknowledged monastic communities. He orders, therefore, that all these sectarians should be stripped of their Apostolic garb, and forbidden to continue in their unlawful association. But such of them as had a vocation for a life of penitence *should be admonished to betake themselves to any of the fraternities living under the protection of the Church;* adding, that such of these brethren as proved refractory should be proceeded against with all the rigour of ecclesiastical discipline, even calling in, in case of need, the inter-

ference of the secular arm. It is almost incidentally stated in the bull, that one of the dangers to be apprehended from the continuance of such abuses, lies in the liability of such ignorant fanatics to fall into erroneous and even heretic notions, as the Pope has heard, to his infinite regret, that some of the impious doctrines which the Church was so hard striving to eradicate, *were supposed to have crept in* among these incautious sectarians.*

Hitherto all the guilt of the Apostles is, therefore, mere infraction of Church discipline. Their heresy either remains yet to be proved, or is the result of mere venial inadvertency, since Honorius would hardly have dreamt of recommending confirmed heretics as fit candidates for any of the monastic flocks flourishing under shelter of the Papal sheepfold.

In the same words and to the same effect, we are informed, another bull was issued in 1290, three years after the restoration of those sharp-sighted inquisitors at Parma. The bull is no longer extant, but allusion occurs to it in Eymeric†, who describes it as a mere iteration of the former decree.

§ 16. The vicissitudes of the sect for the ten remaining years of the century are involved in con-

* See the bull in Eymeric, Direct. Inquisit. p. 270. Addit. ad Dulcini Historiam, p. 448.

† Direct. Inquisit. p. 271.

siderable mystery. The leniency shown to Sagarelli on his first conviction, in 1294, may be explained by a partiality of the bishop in his favour, who may either have been deceived by the real or assumed insanity of his prisoner, or, from feelings of humanity, may have been fain to urge that plea to save him from a fate which he could not avert from his accomplices. Six years later, Obizzo was no longer there to screen him, and then his "many heresies and enormous crimes," for which others had suffered, were at last visited on his own head. If we were to admit the evidence of his enemies against him, however, it was not only to the consummate skill with which he played the part of a fool or madman whenever it suited his purposes, that Sagarelli for so long a time owed his safety, but also to his great readiness to swear and forswear; to renounce any tenet that was pointed out to him as heterodox; in point of fact, to subscribe — with that amiable facility on which Theodore Hook prided himself — "not to thirty-nine articles merely, but to forty, if required."

This dexterity of compromise and tergiversation, by which he contrived to escape from the clutches of the various inquisitorial courts of Lombardy which laid hold of him in repeated instances during his expatriation from 1286 to 1294, must not be considered as peculiar to Sagarelli alone. It was also laid to

the charge of all his sect, and even of his successor, Fra Dolcino*, whom no man, however, ever dreamt of characterising as an idiot or a craven; it was equally represented as the cunning fence of heretics of all ages and countries, none of whom, it is urged, ever scrupled to add duplicity and equivocation, nay, arrant falsehood and perjury, to the many outrages by which they provoked Heaven's wrath.

This charge of deliberate insincerity has been especially preferred against those dissenters who were supposed to entertain Gnostic or Manichæan views,—especially against the Albigenses of France, and Cathari of Italy. It was numbered amongst the heaviest outrages for which Priscillian, Bishop of Avila, in Spain, and his disciples suffered at Treves in 385. It was one of the most heinous sins of those early Manichæans of Orleans and Monforte, to whom allusion has already been made†, and who, as we have said, in the same manner succeeded for a long time in foiling their accusers. We have seen Gherardo, who was one of the elders or teachers of the latter sect, puzzle and perplex the good archbishop Heribert of Milan, shifting his ground like a very Proteus, never swerving from any of the essential tenets of orthodox

* Hist. Dulcini Hæresiarchæ, in Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, tom. ix. p. 435.

† *Antè*, chap. i. §§ 7. and 8.

belief, till the no less dextrous prelate plied him with cross-questions which admitted of no further evasion. Not long after that time the great impugner of the doctrine of transubstantiation, Berenger of Angers*, gave a signal example of the manner in which a dissenter should bow before persecution like a reed before the storm-blast. Always professing to believe as he was bidden, yet always with a mental reservation that he would believe as he deemed reasonable, he avoided his fate by a series of dodges, which showed certainly rather the discretion of a wary tactician than the dignity of an earnest divine; and Terrius†, the leader of an Apostolical sect at Nevers, by that clumsy trick of "Holy Mary" and "Holy Church," had provided his disciples with a shibboleth, by which they could slip through the fingers of many a searching judge.

Upon the same principle, the Apostles of Sagarelli and Dolcino were authorised to baffle their adversaries by every device in their power. Like the Waldenses before, and the Quakers after them, they disapproved of oaths altogether: yet they might use and abuse them most unsparingly, whenever they were required for the interest of their faith,—an interest which they, naturally enough, identified

* *Antè*, chap. i. § 10.

† *Antè*, chap. i. § 22.

with the safety of its propagators. To this faith they were bound to adhere under the worst circumstances, regardless of danger or of any other mortal consideration; they were cheerfully to lay down their life for it, if ever brought to a test that admitted of no escape: yet they should shrink from no quibble or deceit to frustrate the craft of their persecutors; they should beguile them by ambiguous answers, and, so long as they stood on tenable ground, they should make it good by any solemn asseveration, or even oath, that necessity dictated.*

In one word, they were allowed the free use of "white lies" in self-defence. Honest men, it is true, hold that gentle mode of tampering with truth as by far more abject and cowardly than a bold, direct falsehood of the blackest dye; but we must observe that subterfuge and prevarication were no new expedient in the history of Christianity or of the orthodox church. It was practised by some of the guileless and devoted, though less heroic amongst the Primitive Christians†: it was positively recommended, and actually enjoined, no doubt from very good motives, by some of the most respectable fathers of the Church,

* See the tenets of the Apostles as given by Eymeric, Directorium Inquisitorum, p. 273. No. 20. Also Additamentum ad Historiam Dulcini, pp. 457. 460.

† Gibbon, Decline and Fall, chap. xvi.

such as Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome, &c., as we learn from Mosheim, an honest German, who is driven to the admission of the fact, not without great scandal and regret.*

§ 17. But is it, indeed, easy to sit down satisfied with any amount of evidence that those implacable Dominican monks may have contrived to accumulate against the memory of their victims?

We may, on the main, acquit them of any charge of gross misstatement or positive calumny. We will even grant that in most occurrences they acted and wrote in good faith. But their own savage bigotry blinded them, they went to work with preconceived notions, never for a moment doubting any thing that was said of that subtle, all-pervading poison of heresy. Convinced of its existence, they deemed almost any means justifiable to bring it into light. Denial only irritated them; hesitation only increased their suspicion. Plain ingenuousness might be the mask of deepest hypocrisy: the very idiot was in their eyes an arch-deceiver. What confession the subtlety of their questions, the vehemence of their threats, the consciousness of their power, all the terror and mystery that encompassed them, may have extorted from the helpless, trembling beings, whom mere vulgar rumour

* Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. vol. i. p. 358.

often brought before them—is known to all-seeing Heaven alone: but it was on such confessions, merely, that the great edifice of mediæval heresy was reared by them. We will not push our scepticism so far as to reject that heresy altogether as a mere fable; but we may safely contend that, had no such thing really existed, the rack and the San Benito alone would have had power to create it. The Inquisition was an engine of power which utterly defeated its purpose. What was there that it could not prove? What "Yea and Nay" could it not draw from the same mouth at the same breath?

Mere presumption, if very strong and stubborn, and unscrupulous as to the means of inquiry, may arrive at almost any conviction of guilt. It was not to that great bugbear of heresy alone that the same engine gave body and substance in the dark ages. In subserviency to the grasping avarice of a false tyrant, Philip the Fair of France, about the very epoch we are now approaching, in 1307, it equally proved any thing that might be wished against the Templars: it proved against the whole order, and exaggerated to absurdity, what might at the utmost have been the offence of a few members. In obedience to the vindictive rancour of the same monarch, it proved the most puerile and ludicrous charges against the memory of Boniface VIII., proved all the "fashionable" offences of

the time against him—as if that wrathful, ambitious, unprincipled pontiff had not solid crimes enough to answer for. Not many years later, in 1321, it detected a vast conspiracy of "Jews and Lepers" to poison all the fountains and streams in Christendom; it sent hundreds of victims to the scaffold or the stake, "although not a drop of water infected with venomous substances was ever produced, although not a single instance of a death by poison was proved."* Heresy, at any rate, stands on no better foundation than sorcery: it was at the same stake that a multitude of crazy old women were consumed by slow fire, convicted "upon their own confession" of flying through the air on a broom-stick, and holding their Sabbath with fiends under the great walnut-tree at Benevento. Nor was it merely the terrible ordeal of bodily torture that wrenched such avowals. Even in more enlightened ages, in countries boasting of the abolition of the rack, what fabric of guilt is it not in the power of a State-Inquisitor to build up? At Venice or Milan, even at the present day, the ruler has only to say "Let there be a plot!" and the mere moral torture of harass and worry will hatch one for him on the shortest notice.†

* Sismondi, Hist. des Français, tom. v. p. 381.

† Pellico, Le Mie Prigioni, and the more particular accounts of Austrian State Trials, in Andryane's Memoirs of a Prisoner of State, London, 1840.

§ 18. Meanwhile the ashes of Sagarelli were hardly cold on their hearth, the Apostolical congregation at Parma had scarcely been annihilated or dispersed, when the same sect was heard of as flourishing in the northernmost provinces of Lombardy, and in Dalmatia, under the guidance of Fra Dolcino.

At the time of his final apprehension and conviction, in 1307, Fra Dolcino himself declared * that he had embraced the faith of the Apostles, and stedfastly held it for the last sixteen years; also, that he looked upon himself as the immediate successor of Sagarelli, and had in fact shared the supreme power as a chief of the order, even during the lifetime of its founder.

He would, in that supposition, have made his appearance towards the year 1291; and the first serious persecution to which the sect exposed itself soon after that date, in 1294, would thus be ascribed to the rash and headlong character of its new member and leader, who departed from the line of policy traced out by the either very timid or very wary Sagarelli, and seemed rather to court than to shun open hostility with the Church.†

* Hist. Dulcini Hæresiarchæ, in Muratori, Rerum Italicarum Scriptores, tom. ix. pp. 436, 437.

† Mosheim, Geschichte des Apostelordens, book i. § 13.

We shall soon have occasion to see what importance may be attached to Fra Dolcino's assertions, as they have come down to us, and to test the soundness of the hypothesis that has been built upon them. In the mean time, it is fortunate that the character of this heresiarch, as it is so much more interesting than that of his weak-minded predecessor, so it should be more satisfactorily known to us. Mention of Dolcino's name occurs in the lines of Dante, which we have taken as an epigraph to the present essay. The scenes of the dismal drama of the apostle's glorious struggle and fatal end were acted under the eyes of that poet, who had, as we shall see, a great variety of reasons to watch such events with breathless interest. Dante has, of course, dealt with the subject in that curt, summary, and yet mightily impressive manner of his own, which, while it secured it against oblivion, conveyed rather a vague hint than a clear mention of the facts, and prepared ample matter to task the diligence and ingenuity of future inquirers. The earliest commentators of the Divine comedy, and especially Benvenuto da Imola, who wrote about 1376, have done all in their power to throw light upon those historical allusions, which were then already so great a puzzle to the readers of the poet. Benvenuto's notes of this description were considered of so great importance as to be treasured

up as historical documents in one of Muratori's collection. A few facts concerning Dolcino's earliest career have thus been sent down to us through Benvenuto alone, who had obtained them from tolerably authentic sources, as he happened to be brought into contact with a grandson of one Master Raynald of Bergamo, who had been about the person of the great heretic in the capacity of a physician.*

§ 19. Dolcino, then, was a native of the diocese of Novara, probably of Prato, a village on the Sesia, near Romagnano. His father was a priest, and a resident of Taracontano, now Trontano, a place near Domo d'Ossola, in the vale that bears that name, at the foot of the Simplon. The name of this priest is given, Julius; and some Milanese historians of later times, have asserted that he sprung from the Tornielli, a distinguished Milanese family; several branches of which are still flourishing all over Italy, and one especially, bearing the title of Count, at Romagnano itself.† As these historians wrote at a period in which the territory of Novara belonged to the Duchy of Milan, Fra Dolcino has, with no great propriety, been described by them as a Milanese.

* Benvenuti Imolensis, Comment. in Dantis Comœdiam, Inferno, Cant. xxviii. in Muratori, Antiquitates Italicæ Medii Ævi, tom. i. pp. 1020—1022.

† Merula, Antiquit. Gall. Cisalpin. p. 17., lib. i. cap. vii. Ripamonti, Hist. Mediolanens., part ii. p. 217.

The appellation, "son of a priest," has at the present time rather an awkward sound in Catholic Italy; oddly enough, as in itself it implies no illegitimacy, since a widower with a family is allowed to take holy orders, and to run through every degree of clerical preferment. But in the case of Fra Dolcino nothing is more likely than that he was the offspring of one of those somewhat uncanonical connexions, which the Church of Rome loudly denounced as concubinate, but to which still many of the priests of Lombardy, especially in remote country districts, attached all the importance of lawful wedlock, and to which they adhered with unshaken firmness for full two centuries after Gregory VII. and Peter Damianus flattered themselves they had set the question at rest.*

In very tender age Dolcino was sent to Vercelli, under the care of another priest, by name Augustus, apparently with a view to bring him up to the Church. Besides such education as the priest could confer, he procured him the advantage of a good master of a Latin grammar school in the same city. The lad gave early evidence of a bright and active intelligence; he was of small stature†, but had a lively

* See Synodus Provincialis Pergami habita &c. &c., anno Mcccxi. in Muratori, Rer. Italic. Script., tom. ix. p. 539.

† See the Appendix B., Dolcino's Portrait.

countenance and prepossessing manners, which gifts, added to his rapid proficiency in all his pursuits, won him the affection of his tutor, Augustus, and of all about him.

A fatal slip, the gravity of which could only be rightly judged if we knew the precise time of life at which it took place, cut short a career which had thus begun under favourable auspices. The good priest who harboured him under his roof, missed a piece of coin, and imputed his loss to an intimate friend of the house, or more probably a domestic servant, by name Patras. The latter, anxious to exculpate himself, and entertaining suspicions against Dolcino, secured his person, and, by the threat of severe chastisement, compelled him to avow himself the author of the theft. Not satisfied with this private justification, Patras insisted on publicly redeeming his character by a legal prosecution against Dolcino. The good priest, who foresaw in this the utter ruin of his ward, for a criminal conviction would have disqualified him for any advancement in the priesthood, did all in his power to hush the matter up; but the alarmed and perhaps remorseful Dolcino, anxious to avoid the worst consequences of his misdeed, secretly quitted the roof of his benefactor, and was heard of no more for some time.

§ 20. He next appears, no one can say after how

long a time, or at what period of his life, in the town or bishopric of Trent. There is all probability that there he began his apostolate. During his sojourn in that region, he must also have fallen in with that Margaret of Trent, whom he called his sister dearly beloved above all his disciples. That she was a native of Trent, and associated with Dolcino in 1300, results from all authorities. Some add that she was endowed with rare beauty, and possessed of considerable wealth *; that she had left that, and anything else she held dearest, and rejected the offers of numerous and distinguished suitors, to embrace the doctrines of the apostle and follow his fortunes.

§ 21. These bore at no time a very favourable aspect. The Bishop of Trent, from 1289 to 1303, was Philip, of the famous Bonaccolsi family of Mantua, a Franciscan, though for several years an Inquisitor at Verona, and a reputed saint.† He was nevertheless one of the lax Franciscans, since he did not disdain the honours and emoluments of that princely see, and like all the relaxed or conventual party of that Order, he bore no good will towards a man who

* Benvenuti Imolens. Comment. in Dant. Comœd. Inf. Canto xxix. Christoph. Landin. ibid. See also the Appendix B., Further Particulars about Dolcino and Margaret.

† Ughelli, Italia Sacra, tom. v. p. 609. Litta, Famiglie Celebri, art. Bonaccolsi.

declared himself a champion of apostolical or true Franciscan humility. The bishop himself, however, could do the sectarians no very serious harm, since, like other bishops of that time, he had worldly matters sufficient to engross his attention. He had to contend for temporal power over his diocese with Maynard Count of Goritz and his sons, who put forth claims to the feudal dominion of that country, as heirs to the old Counts of Tyrol. These contests, which kept Bonaccolsi out of his see during nearly the whole of his episcopate, might have afforded Dolcino a precarious security in those districts. The Inquisitors, however, were on the watch if bishops slumbered, and by these the heretic seems to have been driven first to the mountains, then out of the whole diocese of Trent; hence away from one valley into another, through the territories of Brescia, Bergamo, and Como (some assert even to Milan itself*), unable to find anywhere a permanent abode, and compelled at last to take refuge beyond all the confines of Italy, in some parts of Dalmatia.

In some parts of Dalmatia, for we know not precisely in what district of that very extensive region, and we are consequently at a loss to say whether it was of his own accord that, after a brief

* Bernard. Corio, Hist. Mediolanens. ad ann. 1307.

sojourn there, he chose to run again the same risks before which he had fled, or whether finding the ground as hot on the eastern shore of the Adriatic as in any Italian province, his return to the scenes of his former struggles was with him a matter of necessity, and if it was with the instinct of the hunted hare, making straight for the lair it was originally flurried from, that Dolcino re-appeared at last, towards 1304, in his native haunts of the valley of the Sesia, on the borders of the dioceses of Vercelli and Novara.

§ 22. It is possible, however, that this last fatal step was occasioned by the tragical end of Sagarelli (July 1300), which threw upon him alone the supreme management of the affairs of the Order, and made him aware that the post of honour was henceforth in the midst of his flock, in the very jaws of danger.

The career of Fra Dolcino, up to the time that he determined to stand at bay on his native mountains of Val di Sesia, is involved in hopeless obscurity. We find from his own words in his last confession, that he fell thrice into the hands of the merciless enemies who sought his life, and that in all these instances he allayed or deluded their fury, either by a flat retraction of all obnoxious doctrines, or more probably by that adroit skirmishing of amphibological phrases by which, like so many other heretics, he

hid his guilty meaning under a cunning tissue of unexceptionable words.

The man, it may be urged, fancied himself trusted with an all-important mission from God himself; he would ill have acquitted himself of his task, had he, from mere punctiliousness of worldly honour, afforded his enemies the satisfaction of cutting him off in mid-career. He might have been free to throw away his life, but not to swerve from the sacred purpose to which it was dedicated.

But the time came at last, evidently when he could or would no longer think of flight or evasion; a day came in which either the world no longer afforded an asylum for him, or in which he considered his mission as all but fulfilled, and thought that nothing remained but to hallow it with his blood. From whatever cause it might arise, the day arose—and it was little more than three years after his predecessor's death—when Dolcino turned round and faced his pursuers: and then no man could better have stood his own ground; no man could more heroically have fought and suffered—no one ever sold his life at a dearer rate.

§ 23. No poor illiterate fanatic was Dolcino. Nothing more different than his character from that of his ill-starred precursor. Wherever he went, his presence was soon—too soon—made manifest by its

prodigious effects. His fiery speech was omnipotent with the uneducated classes, but neither was it lost upon men of high birth and considerable literary attainments. One of his elders, Longino of Bergamo, belonged to the noble family of the Cattaneo*; nor was he the only one of that rank. Dolcino—we have it from the authority of his own enemies—was conversant with the Scriptures, which he could quote familiarly and by heart—those Scriptures which Innocent III. had about one hundred years before strictly and formally withdrawn from the multitude. It was from that source mainly that the apostle drew his arguments; and the inspired tone which gave his language all its impressive power, was borrowed from the strains of Biblical phraseology.

His followers gave him credit for prophetic gifts, we are told; and he stood up in fact, if not as a seer, at least as an authorised interpreter of prophecy. He boasted that God's mind was revealed to him, with an assurance that could only be prompted by a constant direct intercourse with the Powers of heaven. Even this prodigious conceit on his own part, however, we may have good reason to doubt. His

* Hist. Dulcini, p. 439. Baluzii, vitæ Papar. Avenionens. tom. i. p. 605—"Habuit ultra tria millia hominum, robustæ juventutis; inter quos erant aliqui nobiles et divites." Benven. Imolens. p. 1121. See also Appendix C., Dolcino's Companions.

earnest expectation of great events may have been construed into an assumption of supernatural fatidical faculties, either by the superstitious veneration of his followers, or by perverse misrepresentation of his adversaries. That he announced great changes is indeed unquestionable. But he read them out of the Book of Revelation, which it was in those days the fashion for every man to hold up and explain as his own fancy dictated. For above three hundred years before Dolcino, and for more than two centuries after him, the world was all agog with wild millennarian speculations. Dolcino, as we shall see, started nothing new; he only announced the speedy fulfilment of predictions that were current in every man's mouth.

That credit was given him for supernatural powers to which he never laid any claim, results from very good collateral evidence. Peter of Lugo, the same, as we have seen*, who was made to abjure the tenets of the Apostles before the inquisition of Toulouse in 1320, expressed his conviction that the Order established by Sagarelli and Dolcino was approved by God, who, "he had heard it said, operated miracles in their behalf,"† whilst, however, in the words of

* *Antè*, § 14.

† Limborch, Hist. Inquisit.—Liber Sententiar. p. 361.

Dolcino himself, or in the words attributed to him, no mention occurs of similar prodigies.

To what extent Dolcino imposed upon himself or upon others, what point he occupied in that very narrow line which separates the hypocrite from the fanatic, it will not be easy to determine; whether for religious purposes, or in mere worldly matters, nothing has ever been achieved without that inward consciousness of the *Deus in nobis*, which lies equally at the bottom of all heroism and all poetry. No world was ever discovered, no nation enfranchised, no great truth revealed except by this same God-haunted self-reliance. Mazzini and Kossuth announce the forthcoming deliverance of their respective countries, "for next spring," with as strong an assurance as if they had seen the fiat written in the book of fate. Nothing less positive, they knew full well, would go down with their believers. The confidence is here reciprocal: faith becomes a matter of action and reaction. The euthusiast himself feels his own earnestness increase in proportion with the hold it gives him upon his hearers.

§ 24. The hold, at any rate, that Dolcino had acquired upon his sectarians, was in itself a portent. It is everywhere avowed by his opponents, and it too clearly results from the blind fidelity with which they followed his hard destinies. They were all of them

fully as good as their word; "that they would forego all worldly advantages, brave all dangers, encounter the most cruel death, rather than desert their chief, or abandon a tittle of his doctrines, or transgress his commands," was in truth no idle boast.*

That command, be it observed, was defined by no title or statute. The apostles had no permanent hierarchy, no established form of Church discipline. Like some of the Manichæan sect, like the Brethren of the Free Spirit, and other mystic communities, which set up "grace against law," they held together by no other bond of obedience than that of a voluntary inward devotion to a man on whom superior grace shone.† It was, again, the almost magnetic ascendancy of superior genius. No political or religious contrivance ever grounded power on a more unshaken foundation.

We hear from the same enemies of Dolcino's memory, that this ascendancy, in his case, was owing to the might of his inspired language; they add, however, that it partly resulted from the full licence

* "Frater Dulcinus erat intelligens et eloquentissimus, eo quod suavissimâ facundiâ suâ ita ligabat auditores, quod nullus accedens ad eum semel, poterat unquam recedere." Benven. Imol. p. 1121.

† "Sine vinculo obedientiæ exterioris, sed interioris tantum." Additam. at Dulcini Hist. Rer. Ital. tom. ix. p. 454.

he allowed his followers to follow the brunt of all their passions.* But its effects were especially manifest at a time and under circumstances which not only admitted of no indulgence, but in which the constancy of the apostles was tried by hardships and sufferings, of which the history of mankind has hardly any instance.

§ 25. With a suite of such determined and devoted men, numbering at some time or other from 3000 to 6000, and with the peculiar bent of the civil and ecclesiastical authorities against heresy, about that time, in Italy, Fra Dolcino might well be at a loss what to do.

The liberal disposition of the government and people of Lombardy, and especially of Milan, which for a long time had made it the abode of all heresy, was by this time at an end. The extinction of the House of Swabia, a long interregnum ensuing, and the accession of the Emperors of Hapsburg and Austria, who seldom visited Italy, and never meddled with her politics, had brought about the annihilation of the Imperial or Ghibeline party, and given the Church a most formidable ascendancy. The few remaining houses of feudal descent hastened to de-

* "Nec mirum tamen, quia voluptates sectabantur (Dulcini sequaces) quarum erat ibidem officina plena." Benv. Imol. p. 1121.

clare themselves Guelph; and that party had of late derived an overbearing strength by the permanent establishment of the House of Anjou in the south of Italy, and the frequent interference of the French monarchs in Italian, and especially in ecclesiastical matters. France, indeed, in the exultation of her rising power, gave herself no rest till she had brought the Church entirely under her control, by removing the see itself of Christendom to Avignon, about this very period, in 1305. Whatever submission to their own good pleasure the kings of France might exact in return, they were no less anxious to secure the triumph of the Church over all other adversaries. Opposition to the Pope, or to the cowled fiends who came in his name under the name of Inquisitors, was tantamount to a declaration of war to France. Wherever the thunder of the Vatican was void of effect—Frederic of Swabia and Manfred of Apulia were signal and recent instances of the fact—there the sword of Anjou or of France lent its irresistible aid. It was easy for a vast multitude, as we have seen at Parma* in Sagarelli's own times, to fall upon the Dominicans, and drive them from the walls of a free town. But it could enter into the plans of no cool statesman to brave the

* *Antè*, § 15.

consequences of a Roman interdict. The fatal monks had no sooner turned their backs on the refractory city, than the magistrates hastened to disavow the violence of their hare-brained fellow-citizens: they sued for reconciliation; and this never failed to lead to the aggravation of those evils which blind popular fury had, in a fit of momentary ebullition, vainly hoped to put an end to.

§ 26. Fra Dolcino saw too clearly that there could be no rest for him amongst the haunts of man. Happily, beyond the boundaries of civilised Italian life, away in the valleys of the Alps, there were districts in which he might either escape observation, or, offer such a resistance as would weary out any but the most determined and inveterate pursuit.

§ 27. The valley of the Sesia, like most Alpine regions at that period, presented a far different aspect to what it exhibits in our own days. Italian life in the middle ages had flown vigorously towards the towns. Within the walls of each city, and on its immediate environs, society was strongly, compactly organised. Over all such parts of their rural territory as were deemed favourable to agricultural enterprise, the cities had manfully asserted their dominion, and overcome all resistance on the part of the feudal aristocracy, either by utterly crushing, or forcibly adopting the last scions of noble families, compelling

them to remove their residence within the city walls, and to inscribe their name in the rolls of their townspeople. But beyond the limits of the fertile plain, yet within the jurisdiction of the county or diocese, nominally belonging to the city, there were districts either too rugged or too barren to tempt the covetousness or to dread the attacks of republican ambition; there a few remnants of the scattered nobility still held their ground; and thither, as it was too natural, all men whom the frequent vicissitudes of that tempestuous city-life cast out of its bosom — outlaws of every description — found a ready refuge — a refuge which was, however, only of avail to those who either knew how to escape pursuit by concealment, or how to baffle it by such resistance as rendered all aggression a matter of serious difficulty and of doubtful issue.

In one of these comparatively lawless districts, in the back-grounds of the dioceses of Vercelli and Novara, Fra Dolcino hoped to be allowed to shelter his head; and he went there, not improbably without a well settled purpose, whether he should merely play at hide and seek, or boldly grapple with his adversaries. That he first and voluntarily sought a collision seems by no means likely *, both because,

* See Appendix D., First Hostilities at Gattinara.

with all the odds that those impervious mountains could afford in his behalf, the game was too hazardous and too desperate in the long run, and also because the principles of this sect, however necessarily disregarded in the end, admitted of no appeal to the sword, and condemned all war and violence even in self-defence. That the Apostles departed from this article of their belief, and had recourse to carnal weapons in their last extremities, will not greatly surprise us, if we recollect that the Waldenses, who were equally bound to the same quaker-like non-resistance principles, scrupled not to come to blows with French and Savoyard troops, and that, not merely to ward off their own fate, but to fight their way into their beloved valleys, out of which home-sickness was rapidly consuming them.* But for what concerns Dolcino and his Apostles our presumption, that they would never have dreamt of provoking hostilities, is borne out by the little we can collect from the pages of that anonymous writer, to whom we are indebted for nearly all the particulars of the closing catastrophe †, who informs us that for more than one year Fra Dolcino lay quiet, under shelter of a friendly roof, first at Serravalle and

* See Beattie, The Waldenses, London, 1836, especially the chapter headed, "Return of the Exiles," p. 124–171.

† Historia Dulcini Hæresiarchæ, auctore anonymo synchrono in Mur. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ix. p. 429.

Gattinara *, on the Sesia, and then at Campertollio, near Varallo; and that he only betook himself to the mountains, when he was assured that the relentless inquisitors would allow him rest nowhere, and that his only chance of safety lay in the choice of a position which might set his head at a higher value than the most implacable enemy would attach to it.

Dolcino contemplated little else than the formation of something like a Mormon camp. There was, perhaps, hurry and improvidence in the choice of a site. Anxious above all things for security, all intent upon procuring means of defence, it is possible that he little thought whence he should derive his maintenance and support; and that the consequent want and distress compelled him to the first acts of that aggression which it was his interest, and most probably his intention, to shun.

That a collision was unavoidable, and that a collision took place, is all that we may consider as certain. But before we enter into the details of this truly epic struggle, it may be advisable for us to enter somewhat more minutely into the tenets of these Apostolic heretics, that we may the better be enabled to estimate the extent of their offence, and to explain the real motives of the ruthless warfare that was waged against them.

* Appendix D. First Hostilities.

CHAPTER III.

1. Definition of Heresy.—Literal and rational Christianity.—2. Heresy of the Ascetics.—3. Of the Doctors.—4. Errors of the Sect of the Apostles.—5. Their Brethren all over the world.—Popularity of Anti-papal Doctrines in Italy.—Arnold of Brescia, Frederic II., and Dante.—6. The Poet and the Heresiarch.—7. Dangers of the Church.—8. Anti-papal Prophets.—Joachim.—9. Effects of the Terrors of the Church.—Celestine V.—10. The Church on her last struggle—Boniface VIII.—11. Defeat of the Church—Benedict XI.—The Popes of Avignon.—12. The coming Avenger, Frederic III.—13. Mendicant Heresy.—14. Dolcino's Prophecies: Dolcino, Dante, and Joachim.—15. Dolcino's consistency.—16. Failure of his Prophecies.—17. The Church's dread of Prophecies.—Heresy and Sorcery.—Cecco d'Ascoli.—18. Dogmatic Errors of Dolcino's Sect—Manichæism.—19. Its ancient Dogma.—20. How far traceable to the Sect of the Apostles.—21. Manichæan Practices—Celibacy—Abelites and Shakers.—22. Manichæism in the Church—The earliest Paterini.—23. Morals of Dolcino's Disciples—Their "Sisters."—24. Prevalence of similar practices in all times—Promiscuous Monasteries.—25. Tests of Chastity.—26. Graver Manichæan errors—What may be thought of them all.—27. As results from the instance of Dolcino's Apostles.—28. Summing up of evidence respecting these.—29. Authorities in their favour.—30. Their Communism, how it should be understood.

§ 1. If it were possible to reduce to intelligible terms every variety of dissent which the Roman or any other Church characterised as heresy, nothing would seem more natural than to distinguish between the opinions of the "Literal" and those of the "Rational" Christians. The first guilty of errors of Discipline, the second of errors of Dogma.

The former followed a straight, and what seemed

to be a sufficiently safe, course. They read the Scriptures and made it the study of their lives to listen to the teachings of Christ and his apostles, and to follow their examples. It ought to have been difficult to find fault with such men. But the Church deemed them—some of them, at least—reprehensible nevertheless. For the Church, in her wisdom, had found that some of the precepts of Christ and his disciples were incompatible with the frailty and imperfection of human nature, and would, if taken to the letter, prove inapplicable to social purposes. She, therefore, made allowance for the hyperbolical strain of Oriental language, and used her own discretion in interpreting the spirit of the Gospel, so as to accommodate it to the exigencies of all circumstances she had to pass through.

Not but that she admitted and tolerated, even if she did not actually encourage, asceticism: though the observance of strict Christian virtues must always, by contrast, have conveyed a reproach to the power, splendour, and luxury with which she too early encompassed herself. But her forbearance was only evinced in favour of those who were contented to follow holiness in their own lives. Swarms of monks and anchorites were at liberty to starve, scourge, and otherwise make fools of themselves. Their penances were intended for the glorification not only of God,

but of his Church. The latter profited by their austerities. She shone by their reflected light. These ascetics performed, as it were, the "dirty work" of the Church.

§ 2. But there were other more earnest and severe, bigoted men, who did not think asceticism should be optional merely and exceptional. They wished to make the letter of the Gospel an inexorable iron law, binding not on themselves alone, but, if not on the whole Christian people, at least on all who laid claim to apostolic succession, on all who assumed to be the "salt of the world." Priesthood without apostolic holiness—and that synonymous with utter poverty and humility—was for them a monstrosity. These either boldly professed themselves, or were declared, the Church's foes—the heretics.

§ 3. But, again, it was not merely a rule of life that Christ and his apostles had prescribed. They had also laid down a form of belief. Every religion, whether natural or revealed, is matter of doubt and controversy: and it was not certainly the wish of the founders of Christianity, that all their meaning should be bared before the gaze of mere mortals. The Church undertook not so much to explain as to sum up that abstruse and recondite belief: it aimed less to the satisfaction than to the subjugation of the human understanding. It laid down its dogma as

absolute as it was awful, as peremptory as it was unintelligible. She allowed of co-operation, indeed, but suffered no contradiction. Free to the divine to dive into those mysteries, to make as fearful a havoc amongst them as his own subtlety suggested, so only as he referred the ultimate judgment of the soundness of his theories to the Infallible one. By submitting to authority, the orthodox theologian became invested with it. He was inscribed with the titles of "admirable, seraphic, or angelic" amongst the doctors of the Church: but rebellion against the final degree of Pontiff or Council, independence of reason and conscience, was set down as heterodoxy —was branded as heresy.

The views of the mere disciplinarians could not have been more simple and uniform. In the middle ages, the disciples of Peter de Bruys, of Henry or Peter de Waldo, the apostolical sects of the twelfth century, the Beghards and Beguins of the two ensuing ages, the Fraticelli or seceding Franciscans, &c. were all under the dominion of one leading idea: they aimed at a restoration of pure apostolical or evangelical life, and wished to bring back the Church to its discipline. The opinions of the dogmatic or rational heretics were necessarily as various as the subjects which tasked their ingenuity. They rested on the doctrine of the Trinity, on that of transub-

stantiation, &c.: but, in that period of the middle ages to which we refer, the main topics of controversy arose from a wish to reconcile God's infinite goodness with his boundless power; a wish that had, from earliest times, given birth to the manifold sects of Gnostics and Manichæans. The tenets of these old sects were supposed to have revived, though with great modifications, amongst the Paulicians of the east, to have been traced to the west among some of the disciples of these in Italy and France in the eleventh century, and to have at last broken forth among the Albigenses of Languedoc and the Paterini or Cathari of Lombardy.

§ 4. The apostles of Sagarelli and Dolcino were supposed to share both the errors of the literal and those of the rational Christians. They were half Waldenses, half Cathari; that is, say their enemies, supposing there existed any material difference between the two denominations.

From the first of these imputations, no man would certainly undertake to clear them. They professed to believe all that the Church taught—they meant, however, supposing the Church to be as it should be; but there never were bitterer enemies of the Church as it was. Their tenets on that score are amongst the twenty articles constituting their creed; as such they are given with sufficient clearness and con-

sistency in the memorials of the inquisitors and other writers hostile to them; sufficient, we say, to convince us that these tenets have not been greatly tampered with or misrepresented.*

From these it very plainly results that, in their opinion, the spirit of God had departed from the Church, which was no longer the Church of Christ, but the wanton woman riding on the beast with the seven heads and the ten horns, described in the seventeenth chapter of the book of Revelations.†

That the authority which the Pope and his hierarchy pretended to hold from the apostles was absolutely void and null, unless they lived, like the apostles, in utter poverty and humility, discountenancing war and persecution, and allowing the faithful to live according to the freedom of the Gospel.‡

That as they—Sagarelli's disciples—strictly conformed to apostolical life, they were the true Church: on them devolved the power conferred by Christ on the apostles of old: and they might therefore consider themselves independent of, and superior to, all ecclesiastical authority.§

Like all or most Christian sects, they were said to

* Eymeric: Director. Inquisitor. p. 268. Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ix. p. 456.

† See the articles as above, No. 1 and 2.

‡ Art. 11, 12, 13. § Art. 3, 4, 5. 7.

have exclusive ideas of salvation through their communion alone. They could free from all obligation, and even from the marriage tie, any person willing to join them, and were, on the other hand, forbidden from entering into any other order or sect; for with them alone was true perfection and holiness, &c. &c.*

They denied the Pope all right to interfere with them, and denounced eternal condemnation to all their enemies and persecutors. †

They contended that no tithes should be paid to the clergy, unless they gave evidence of true apostolic mission by their style of living: adding that they themselves, as rigid imitators of apostolic examples, were entitled to the bounties of the faithful; by which we must understand, not the tithes as the Church collected them, but their daily bread merely, as not only property of any kind, but even provision for the morrow, was strictly interdicted by the rule of their founder. ‡

Finally, they dated the corruption of the Church from the days of Sylvester, the Pope, or rather Bishop of Rome, from 314 to 336; and from the donation said to have been made to that Pontiff by

* Art. 7, 8, 9. † Art. 6. 10. ‡ Art. 14.

the Emperor Constantine of that temporal power and wealth which had been equally fatal to all Sylvester's successors, with the single exception of Peter of Morone, a hermit who had been raised to the Popedom, and occupied it for a few months in 1294, under the name of Celestine V.*

§ 5. If there is anything peculiarly striking in this enumeration of the articles of belief of these apostles, it is merely the total absence of any thing like a new or original thought amongst them.

That power and wealth had been the bane of the Church; that she could only be reclaimed through a renunciation, whether voluntary or compulsory, of all worldly goods; that there could be no holiness without absolute indigence, without true Christian meekness, was the theme of all earnest believers, whether orthodox or otherwise. The Church itself acknowledged the truth of such censures, whenever they were not too pointedly aimed at herself; she gave into the spirit of the times by encouraging asceticism, wherever she found it associated with a proper degree of deference and submissiveness. The hundred and one sects throughout all Europe were only eloquent on that inexhaustible subject. But, in Italy, the circumstances of the country gave that

* Art. 12.

religious tendency a peculiar political importance. Ghibelinism had been overcome, and Italian freedom had now nothing to fear except from overwhelming Papal ascendancy. Reassured from all apprehension on the side of Germany, the Italians were made uneasy by the rising power of France; and saw with dismay the alliance between the Church and that formidable neighbour. With a prophetic instinct, they felt that there was between them and the Pope a question of life and death. They were still too good Catholics to wish for the extinction of the Papacy, but spoke very freely about the expediency of its dethronement.

It was now more than one hundred and fifty years since Arnold of Brescia had hurled defiance against the temporal power of the clergy, and most distinctly proclaimed that "neither bishop, nor priest, or monk, could by any means be saved, if clogged, the former with regal or lordly power, the latter with lands or any other earthly goods."* Arnold's destroyer, Frederic I., himself had acted upon that hint, and still more pertinaciously Frederic II., his grandson. The ashes of this latter monarch were hardly cold in their grave, and the writings of his high chancellor were in full circulation, in which the Emperor's in-

* Otto Frising. De Rebus Gestis Friderici I. cap. xxi. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. vi. p. 719.

tentions about "bringing back the Church to apostolic life, and ridding the clergy of that fatal burden of riches which sunk them to perdition," were made manifest to the world.*

During the pontificate of the worldly-minded popes of the Savelli and Orsini families, Italy resounded with one unanimous outcry against them, and the universally prevailing thought found at last utterance through the inspired strains of the great poet of the age, who, precisely at the time that Dolcino was raised to the office left vacant by Sagarelli's death, was uttering those famous invectives which might seem borrowed from the Apostle's own epistles:—

"Ah Constantine! to how much ill gave birth
Not thy conversion, but that plenteous dower
Which the first wealthy father gained from Thee!"

And,—

"Of shepherds like to you the Evangelist
Was ware, when her who sits upon the waves
With Kings in filthy whoredom he beheld;
She who with seven heads towered at her birth,
And from ten horns her proof of glory drew,
Long as her spouse in virtue took delight."†

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* Petri de Vineis, Epistolar. lib. i. Ep. ii. p. 97.

† "Ahi, Costantin, di quanto mal fu matre
Non la tua conversion ma quella dote
Che da te prese il primo ricco patre!"

§ 6. Nor was mere detestation of Roman corruption the only point of contact between the heretic and the poet. Dante shared Dolcino's hopes and aspirations no less than his zeal and indignation. And it would not be easy, otherwise, to see by what peculiar interest those lines would have been dictated which had so much effect towards screening Dolcino's memory from oblivion. The verses we allude to were, in all probability, written at the opening of Dolcino's campaign. The epoch of Dante's vision, as every reader knows, is by him referred to the holy week of the year 1300; that is, of the year of Sagarelli's death and commencement of Dolcino's apostolate. But the poem itself was written at a later period; indeed, Dante was busy at it from the year of his banishment to that of his decease (1302—1321). That word of warning conveyed to the sectarian chief, through the organ of a reprobate of hell, — the word that the poet puts in the mouth of Mahomet,—was, in all probability, spoken in 1304, at

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"Di voi pastor s' accorse il Vangelista
Quando colei che siede sovra l' acque
Puttaneggiar co' regi a lui fu vista:
Quella che con le sette teste nacque
E dalle diece corna ebbe argomento
Finchè virtute al suo marito piacque."

DANTE, *Inferno*, canto XIX.

the epoch in which the apostle-leader had taken up his position in the mountains of Upper Val Sesia, and a crusade was preached against him by the authorities of the diocese of Novara. It was not the prophet of Mecca, it was Dante himself, who might almost contemplate joining Dolcino, at the time, who sang out, from his full heart,—

"Thou, who perchance
Shalt shortly view the Sun, this warning thou
Bear to Dolcino; bid him, if he wish not
Here soon to follow me, that with good store
Of food he arm him, lest imprisoning snows
Yield him a victim to Novara's power,
No easy conquest else."*

Dante was, though not in everything one of Sagarelli's disciples, yet an apostle.† He looked upon himself as one gifted with prophetic powers, trusted with a heavenly mission, especially to work out the restoration of universal monarchy by utter confusion

"Or dì a Fra Dolcin dunque che s' armi,
Tu che forse vedrai il sole in breve,
S' egli non vuol qui tosto seguitarmi,
Sì di vivanda che stretta di neve
Non rechi la vittoria al Novarese,
Che altrimenti acquistar non saria lieve."

DANTE, *Inferno*, canto XXVIII.

† Foscolo, Discorso sul Testo della Divina Commedia, London, 825, p. 77-90.

to the Church. His journey through the eternal realms had no other object than to fit him for this apostolate; and his purpose is clearly enough made known at the close of that eventful pilgrimage, when the apostle Peter all but consecrates him in the highest heaven by the imposition of hands:—

"Thus benediction uttering with song,
Soon as my peace I held, compassed me thrice
The apostolic radiance, whose behest
Had oped my lips, so well their answer pleased."*

These theories about the subjection of Church to State found a more thorough development in the less known, but no less important, book "De Monarchia." The Church of Rome well understood the meaning of that work when it consigned it to the flames; and to the flames she would equally have doomed the author himself, had he not escaped his fate by the sad solitude and obscurity of all his lifetime. Cardinal Bertrand du Poïet, the nephew or son, at any rate the legate, of the French pope, John XXII., would have shown no better mercy to the poet's ashes, and would have dug up the grave where

* "Così benedicendomi cantando
Tre volte cinse me, si com' io tacqui,
L' apostolico lume, al cui comando
To avea detto, sì nel dir gli piacqui."
DANTE, *Paradiso*, canto XXIV., at the end.

they had been laid only two years before, had it not been for the interference of Guido da Polenta, the patron and friend of Dante, who had received his dying breath.*

§ 7. The apostles of Fra Dolcino were, therefore, nothing more than the expression of the anti-papal spirit universally prevalent in that age. With this wide-spread, deep-rooted animosity against her, Rome had struggled till she waxed faint and weary in the contention: she had now grown almost callous to abuse. Mere attacks of words, even those uncourteous phrases of the Apocalypse, would have fallen unheeded against her shield of arrogance and assurance. We have seen that the first steps of Sagarelli were treated with a leniency akin to contempt. The Church was standing upon a rock; what could a few croaking idiots and fanatics achieve to endanger the firmness of its foundations?

Events had, however, occurred of late that gave Rome no trifling ground for uneasiness. The Church was a house divided against itself. Rebellion had spread among the ranks of that very Franciscan militia which had been enlisted in her service. Those cowled malcontents, those paltry brotherlets (Fraticelli), so despicable in themselves, were, however,

* Foscolo, Discorso sul Testo, p. 20.

strong by the organisation that their founder had given them. They were the apostles of the lower classes; they penetrated the mass of the people to a depth which no other minister of the altar had ever reached before. The Church had most incautiously given the multitude into their hands. They could equally hold it in her behalf, or turn it against her.

Formidable as such enemies must necessarily be, they were also hidden enemies. The danger did not altogether arise from the declared seceders, or well-known schismatic Franciscans. The whole Order was rotten at the core, and for a long time it was impossible to determine how many thousands of the conventual brethren might incline towards the views of the Spirituals, or how soon they would throw off their allegiance and join the bands of the rebels.

§ 8. Nor was it merely a blind impotent rancour that these runaway monks cherished in their bosom. There was method in the war they waged. There was a secret hope, nay, a good confidence, of victory. They were all awaiting the fulness of the times; the accomplishment of a promised redemption. The Fraticelli had their "Everlasting Gospel," and their "Introduction to the Everlasting Gospel." Dante, Fra Dolcino, every man in those days, was a prophet, or had, at least, faith in prophecy. The abbot Joachim of Flora, whom Dante eulogises as

" Endowed
With soul prophetic,"*

had given the text for all these wonder-working predictions. A strong belief in coming events, if shared by a vast multitude, is sufficient to bring about their realisation. This the Church well understood; and it was, we little doubt, the great stir created in men's minds by the free circulation of the Everlasting Gospel that at last aroused her from her slumbers, and gave her that alarm which prompted persecution.

To what extent the rebellious Franciscans and other begging fraternities had shaken the rock-built fabric of the Vatican, may be collected from the fact, that they themselves for once sat on the Vatican, and well-nigh secured the government of the Church into their own hands. We have seen that Dolcino's apostles accused the whole series of Roman pontiffs, from Sylvester to Boniface VIII., of profligacy and corruption, with the single exception of Celestine V. This latter was the real Franciscan pope. We do not mean by this that he was the only pope issuing out of the order of St. Francis; but he was a pontiff according to the heart of Francis himself; his choice was effected in obedience to the clamours of a vast

* " Il Calavrese abatè Giovacchino
Di spirito profetico dotato."
DANTE, *Paradiso*, canto XII. v. 131

party, both within and without that order, who insisted on making the rule of the saint of Assisi the only law for the whole ecclesiastical body.

§ 9. Pope Nicholas IV. died on the 4th of April, 1292. He was the last of a series of worldly-minded pontiffs who had thrown the world, and especially Italy, into confusion, out either of personal, family, or party ambition. His fond partiality for the Colonna family was but in keeping with the bold *nepotism* of Honorius IV. for the Savelli, of Nicholas III. for the Orsini, &c. &c. The scandal that the evil practices of these meddling pastors had given, caused discord and perplexity among the cardinals assembled for the election of Nicholas IV.'s successor, and gave rise to an interregnum of more than two years. At the close of this period (July 5. 1294), a real fit of the Holy Ghost seemed to have seized the Conclave; or else the dictates of a necessary policy induced them to look out for a saint to fill the chair of St. Peter. Their choice fell on Pietro da Morone. He was originally a Benedictine monk; but he had retired to a life of more rigid penance on a mountain near Salmona, in Abruzzo, from which he took his name. He was born, we are told, a full-clad monk, with a frock on, and a cowl on his head. His solitude was haunted by the whole host of heaven, and by the Holy of Holies—the

Saviour himself. It was consequently beset by a throng of worshippers attracted by the fame of his miracles. Here, deep in his devotional exercises, an archbishop and two bishops, the bearers of the result of the Conclave, found him. They threw the Papal mantle over his tattered sackcloth; they mounted him on an ass (for even the *Chinea* or milk-white ambling palfrey of the popes would have been too much of a steed for his nerves); they surrounded him with all the pomp and glitter of a court; they placed two kings (Charles II. of Naples, and Charles Martel of Hungary) at his stirrups,—and dwarfish, squalid, and ugly, they promenaded the poor, reluctant, bewildered solitary through the streets of Aquila, and hence conveyed him, by easy stages, to Naples.

The weak-brained hermit felt giddy at his unwonted elevation. He shrank from that splendour like an owl from noontide glare. The two kings, his patrons, and a few crafty advisers, ruled under his name. They obtained from him the nomination of twelve cardinals, all French; a measure which soon afterwards completed the work of subjection of the Church to France. His electors were soon terrified at their own work. They had put forward a holy man with a view to reconcile the multitude; but they expected him in the end to be reasonable.

Seeming saints had before that time made their way to the Papacy; mere wolves in sheep's clothes, who had not been long in throwing off their disguise. But this new pontiff was impracticable, a *bonâ fide* saint, irreclaimable; fit only to pray and to fast, and fully convinced that his pontifical duties were best discharged by praying the louder and fasting the harder. The cardinals had no vocation to go such lengths hand-in-hand with him; nor could they suffer him to proceed too far without them. One of them, the profligate Caietani, afterwards his successor, Boniface VIII., set himself at the Pope's side, and literally scared his soul out of that meagre body. By the means, they say, of a speaking-trumpet, he conveyed to him Heaven's bidding that he should resign. The ill-fated Celestine hardly required so loud a summons. From the very outset he had made frequent attempts to run away from his greatness. He now called together his cardinals, made known his pious wish to give up the world for the sake of his own precious soul. He obtained their sanction to a decree empowering a pope to abdicate, and signed the act of his deliverance on the 13th of December, 1294, *five months* and eight days after his election.*

* Vita Sancti Celestini, Rer. Ital. Script., tom. iii. part i. p. 616, &c.

§ 10. This sorry farce of a "Pope in spite of himself" had, however, more significance than has generally been attributed to it. His successor, Boniface, was too crafty not to perceive that the saint was more formidable after his deposition than in the plenitude of a power he was so ill suited to wield. He had seen the whole Neapolitan clergy kneeling at Celestine's feet, in vain endeavours to shake his resolution. A very large party of the Church denied the validity of his abdication; nay, the admiration of the multitude for his merely passive virtues was still so strong several years later as to compel Clement V., as worldly-minded a man as ever sat on St. Peter's chair, to give it the sanction of the Church by a solemn act of canonisation. The whole begging world, who had found the leader they had so long been waiting for, were less disposed to resign the power which they had secured through him. They had ranged themselves under his immediate orders by obtaining his consent to the foundation of a new fraternity, to be called "The Celestine Eremites of St. Francis." Thus organised, the mendicant rioters were still storming at the threshold of the Church. Boniface felt the necessity of cutting off the head of the dangerous hydra. He threw the deposed pontiff into a dungeon, where, after various romantic adventures, he died a miserable death, on the 19th of

May, 1296. He suppressed the order formed under Celestine's auspices, annulled all his acts, and summoning the Dominican heretic-burners around him, he prepared to do battle against all who would dare to regret Celestine's memory.

But the memory of Pietro da Morone was still green in the minds of his worshippers. The great era of which he had been hailed the harbinger was no less surely approaching, though he would no longer be there to inaugurate it. Even those who had been disappointed in him, those who, like Dante, anathematized the craven,

> ——— "who, to base fear
> Yielding, abjured his high estate,"*

were no less convinced that none but godly men, none but Apostles, should sit on the throne of St. Peter. And Boniface, in the meanwhile, not satisfied with treading on the footsteps of his worst predecessor, outdid them all in arrogance and imperiousness, and added some glaring instances of almost unexampled rapacity and perfidiousness. He thus filled the measure of popular wrath, and, in Italy at least, with purely Italian means, rendered the Papacy an impossibility. He seemed aware of this for some time, and grounded all his power on French support;

* "Che fece per viltate il gran rifiuto."
DANTE, *Inferno*, iii. 57.

but blinded by passion, he improvidently cut off the very props he stood on, and engaged in that contest with Philip the Fair, in which not only did himself perish a victim, October 10th, 1303, but the Church also only escaped destruction by submitting to an ignominious captivity.

§ 11. After the death of Boniface VIII. an attempt was made to elect, if not a saint, at least an honest man, in his place. The Conclave was still under the influence of popular opinion, and their choice fell on the Cardinal d'Ostia, Benedict XI., the only man in the sacred college who could be made acceptable to the multitude. But the maxim that a Pope should not be allowed to do good if he chose, had already become the leading idea of Roman policy. Benedict perceived that he was a prisoner in the Cardinal's hands, and when, almost by a stratagem, he succeeded in making good his escape, his death was immediately resolved upon. He died "of a plate of figs" (July 4th, 1304); and after nearly a year's disorders, Philip the Fair, of France, carried an election in favour of Bertrand de Gotte, Clement V. (June 5th, 1305), the first of those Pontiffs of Avignon, none of whom ever was known to be any better than his Cardinals wished him, any better than a Pope should be.

The disappointment occasioned by the faint-

heartedness of Celestine V., and by the premature fate of Benedict XI., was too much calculated to exasperate the anger of that pious multitude who were so anxious to evangelize the Church. Since it was too evident that even a Pope's authority or example were of no effect towards a reformation of deep-rooted abuse, since a reformation could be the work of no intrinsic change, they laid all their hopes on the interference of extrinsic agencies. They looked out for a chastiser of the Church, an avenger. It was for the sword to cure the rottenness of the Christian body, and that to be wielded by a monarch and a conqueror. It was once more the great prediction of Joachim of Flora, the oracle of all the enemies of Rome. This prediction circulated in manuscripts, and underwent the strangest modifications, not during this age merely, but for more than two centuries later. Joachim had said that "the Eagle would come, the mere whirring of whose mighty pinions would cause the Lion's overthrow." Gregory VII. and his successors had grounded the Papacy on the ruins of Monarchy: it was for an emperor to reassert his supremacy by the humiliation of the Papacy. Joachim's life had passed between two Emperors, both bearing the name of Frederic, both of the House of Swabia, who both had attempted the subjugation of the Church, and both had perished

in the struggle. A new champion of Monarchy was now at hand; and for a long time men looked for him amongst the last scions of the Swabian line, among all the monarchs who bore the name of Frederic.

§ 12. There was, from 1291 to 1337, a Prince, who seemed to answer all these particulars. This was King Frederic III. (II. of Sicily); the son of Peter III. of Aragon, and of Constance, daughter of Manfred of Apulia, and, through this latter, grandson to the second Frederic. Like his father Peter, and his brother James, of Aragon, Frederic had to contend all his lifetime for his maternal inheritance of Sicily, against the House of Anjou, who had usurped the Kingdom of Naples, and laid claims to the Sister Kingdom, and against the Popes and the French Kings who supported such claims. Frederic was, therefore, looked upon as the head of the Ghibeline party, and was even thought to aspire to the imperial diadem: and although he repeatedly reconciled himself with the Church, and obtained a short truce with his enemies, although he even came forward in support of Boniface VIII., during his final struggle with Philip the Fair, in 1303*, yet his ordinary place was in the foremost ranks of the foes to the

* Muratori, Annal. d'Italia, ad ann. 1303. Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, tom. ii. p. 341.

Papacy, and if he never actually obtained the imperial crown, he was, nevertheless, in close alliance with all the wearers of it, especially with Henry VII., of Luxemburg, and Louis IV. of Bavaria, both of whom came to Italy to rally the Ghibeline party, and only lacked the good fortune or the talents of the great Swabian heroes to accomplish what these latter had left unachieved.

Frederic of Sicily was, therefore, for a long time, the idol of all the enemies of Rome—the idol, that is, of that anti-papal, anti-gallic party whom we call Ghibeline, and of that vast number of ecclesiastical dissenters whom we might style evangelical or apostolical. He was, most probably, one of the many heroes to whom Dante looked up for redress; since we are informed by Boccaccio *, that the third division of his poem, the Paradise, was dedicated to him. The Poet, indeed, lived to feel bitterly disenchanted about him, as about any other living being; and forgetting that he had called him and his brother James,

"Aragonia and Sicilia's pride," †

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* Boccaccio, Vita di Dante, p. 68–69. Foscolo (Discorso sul Testo, &c. p. 350, &c.) thinks it improbable, but we are willing to take Boccaccio's word, nevertheless.

† "Genitrice
Dell' onor di Sicilia e d'Aragona."
DANTE, *Purgatory*, iii. 113.

he launched forth into bitterest invectives against

"his avarice and cowardice,"*

no doubt at a time that the king was under necessity to yield to fortune, and make his peace with the pontiffs. These and other charges against Frederic are, however, triumphantly contradicted by the testimony of all historians, who give him the boast of being the wisest and bravest prince of his age.†

However disappointed Dante might be in him, Frederic continued nevertheless to be the support and refuge of all who were worsted in their fight against Rome or Avignon. As late as 1313, all the seceding Franciscans or Fraticelli of Lombardy, Romagna, and Tuscany were fain to fly to him for an asylum against the violence of Clement V., who had armed all the rest of the world against them.‡

§ 13. The war against heresy had now broken open afresh. The faggots that had been quietly smouldering under ashes after the terrible times of Gregory IX. were fanned into a new blaze by the haughty Boniface VIII.; and all the wrath of this

* ——— "L'avarizia e la viltade."

DANTE, *Paradiso*, xix. 127.

† Muratori, Annal. d'Ital. ad ann. 1337. Sismondi, Républiques Italiennes, tom. ii. p. 340, &c.

‡ Wadding, Annales Minorum, vol. vi. p. 213–265.

pope was especially turned against the partisans of his predecessor, against the upholders of apostolical humility, under whatever garb they might try to hide themselves. The thunders of the Vatican were first hurled by him at the head of the obnoxious Fraticelli as early as 1297. A short respite might have been obtained under the good-natured Benedict XI., had he ever had his own will, for he begged the inquisitors "so to exercise their office that the cry of their victims might not reach his ears;"* but yet more terrible times came under Clement V., John XXII., and all that series of loathsome Avignonese pontiffs.

Together with the Fraticelli and other similar sectarians, the Apostles of Sagarelli began to suffer persecution at this same crisis of ecclesiastical affairs. It was only three years before Boniface's bull was aimed at the seceding Franciscans, that four of Sagarelli's disciples suffered at Parma (1294), and only four years after the date of that bull (1300), that sentence of death was passed against the arch-apostle himself, at Parma, and that Dolcino had to provide for his safety by flight to Dalmatia, exactly at the epoch in which the most incorrigible Fraticelli had also to take refuge in the East, into Achaia;

* Tiraboschi, Storia Letteraria, vol. viii. p. 645.

and hence into some desert island, to each of which asylums the ruthless watchfulness of their enemies soon knew how to track them.* All these statements have been made with a view to demonstrate that our Apostles were but a fraction of a vast community of those "Parvi Fratres de Paupere Vita," between whom and Rome there was then so deadly a quarrel. From these "Little Friars" the Apostles differed in some trifling peculiarities of dress, and, possibly, of creed; but they were bound to them by unity of purpose, and it was this purpose which, backed by the suffrage of an admiring multitude, and abetted by the scattered remnants of the imperial or Ghibeline party, gave all these religious dissenters a formidable political importance, quite sufficient to explain the inveteracy with which Rome laboured at their extermination.

§ 14. Amongst other peculiarities that distinguished them, the Apostles had, besides a name, a costume, and a chief, also a prophet of their own. The substance of Dolcino's predictions has come down to us, though through the same suspicious channel of the unonymous, unfriendly writers through whom we are made acquainted with his religious belief. Dolcino is stated to have sent forth three epistles,

* Mosheim, Eccles. Hist vol. ii. p. 574., and notes.

indited to the whole Christian world, and especially to the followers of his own sect. The first is dated August, 1300: only one month, that is, after Sagarelli's execution; the second was issued in the Christmas season 1303, probably from Dalmatia; the contents of these are summarily given*; the third seems altogether to have escaped the diligence of these historians. There is a vast deal of Apocalyptic trash in what is there laid before us, with which it would be unwise to fatigue our readers. Even as a prophet Dolcino is there represented as an arrant plagiarist. No mention of Joachim occurs in his words, but it is clear that his prophecy was only a new version of the Sibylline sayings traditionally attributed to the gifted abbot of Flora. There were only a few modifications—some further extension and adaptation to circumstances of that *trinal* idea, which among all Joachimites, governed the world. According to Joachim, we have seen† the age of the Spirit was to conclude those of the Father and Son. The "Everlasting Gospel" was intended as a completion of the Old and New Testament. Men who had lived according to the flesh under the old Jewish dispensation, who had reconciled the flesh with the spirit under Christian rule, were now, in

* Historia Dulcini, p. 435. Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 450, &c.

† *Antè*, § 8., and chap. ii. § 12., and chap. i. § 50.

this third era to live according to the spirit merely: this new era was to date from the year 1260, and was to be ushered in by barefooted brethren, true to Apostolic mission.

At this stage of affairs, Dolcino takes up the prediction. The barefooted brethren are Sagarelli's disciples, who made their first appearance in that eventful year. Ever since that epoch, the work of redemption has been in progress. The Apostles have suffered; they have been driven to flight and concealment, even as Christ's own apostles had done before them. But their triumph is at hand: their vindicator is born, has already long since attained man's estate and regal power. The Apostles were professedly men of peace, but they had long since abandoned all hope of prevailing by mere gentle means. The sword was to prepare the way for their peaceful mission. The old edifice of the Church must fall, must be levelled with the ground, ere they could hope to lay the first stone for their new one. What they expected was Reformation by the sword.

The wielder of this sword was no ideal personage. The victims of all succumbing parties are apt to die with those words on their lips: —

"Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor."

But Dolcino's avenger was not vaguely foreshadowed. Indeed he was too distinctly individualized. Wedded to the same ideas, living on the same hopes, Dante had also his own favourite hero—perhaps heroes—in view. He also lived and died in daily expectation of the subduer of priestly arrogance, of the restorer of monarchic dignity: but he was a poet, and delighted in mystic language; he dealt in allegories; the coming man was typified, now by

"the greyhound coming to destroy
The false she-wolf with poignant pain;" *

now by the

"heir of that Eagle
Who left the chariot plumed;" †

literally, the successor of that Constantine who feathered the nest of the Church.

All this, as if it had been his pleasure to perplex his commentators, who have, for the last five hundred years, been cudgelling their brains to apply

* "Infin che il Veltro
Verrà che la farà morir di doglia."
DANTE, *Inferno*, canto I. v. 115.

† "Non sarà tutto tempo senza reda
L' aguglia che lasciò le penne al carro."
Purgatory, xxxiii. 37.

such allusions, now to one, now to another of the Ghibeline chiefs of those times, to Cane della Scala, to Uguccione della Faggiuola, and finally, with more plausibility, to Henry VII. of Luxemburg, who filled the throne of Germany from 1308 to 1313: though it is very likely that Dante, unwilling to commit himself, purposely dealt in insoluble riddles, or that the strains of his prophecies were changed in the same measure as the political horizon was altered around him.

Of the Eaglet, or *pullus aquilæ*, of Joachim, however, none of his disciples lost sight. It was, plainly enough, only an Emperor who could answer the purpose of either Ghibeline or Beggar-monk. Mosheim has amused himself in fishing out all the Frederics, or other princes of different name, to whom the hopes of the world were successively turned.* So long as any scion of the House of Swabia could be

* Ketzergeschichte, part II. Geschichte des Apostelordens, Note V. It may be desirable to give one of these predictions, the earliest, and probably the most vague and oracular, and in fact the only one which might, perhaps, be ascribed to Joachim without too glaring an anachronism: —

"Veniet Aquila, de cujus volatu delebitur Leo: Veniet Pullus Aquilæ et nidificabit in domo Leonis. De radice Aquilæ surget alius Aquila, cujus nomen Fridericus, qui regnans regnabit, extendetque alas suas usque ad fines terræ. Cujus sub tempore Summus Pontifex et clerus dilapidabitur et dispergetur."

traced through any of its remote branches, legitimate or otherwise, so long as a prince could be found, no matter of what race, who, no matter from what motives, might be supposed to harbour evil designs against the pope and clergy,—there the expectant multitude fancied they could recognise the Man of Joachim. This strange delusion was sent down from generation to generation, and was only dispelled at the decease of the Emperor Frederic III., of the House of Austria (1440-1473), on whom all the yearnings of the enemies of the Church centered with unprecedented earnestness, especially because the long disorders consequent on the great western schism seemed indeed to have brought the Church to the verge of irreparable ruin.

§ 15. Poor Dolcino was both explicit and consistent. Far from entertaining, or at least betraying, any misgiving as to the certainty of his predictions, he staked all his chances on their fulfilment. He was willing, we are told *, to be branded with falsehood and imposture, both for himself and his disciples, and ready to give his enemies and persecutors all credit for sincerity, if a single tittle should pass away of that future which he held from God's own revelation.

For him the Deliverer could be only one. Faithful to the system of *ternaries* laid down by the be-

* Additamentum ad Dulc. Histor. p. 452.

lievers in Joachim, he could only conceive that the work begun under one Frederic, and continued under another, could be achieved by a third. This third Frederic had made his appearance in 1291; the very year, by another momentous coincidence, in which Dolcino himself had joined the Apostolical sect: that Frederic was now bravely struggling for his inalienable rights against all the might of Anjou, of France, and of Rome; and he was known to be boiling with indignation at the sight of the vices of the clergy, and burning with desire to avenge the grievances of the bride of Christ. God would speed him in all his undertakings: he would give him the victory over all his enemies: he would raise him to the imperial throne. From the height of that power he would depute nine kings to rule over Italy.* By his own might, and by their aid, he would smite the Church with the sword, the Pope and the College of Cardinals; all the prelates and secular priests, as well as all the orders of monks and nuns without exception. The time of this direful catastrophe was, also, too accurately determined: all was to come to pass within the third year after the date of that first epistle; consequently, in the year 1303. After wreaking God's wrath on the ministers of a

* Or *new* kings: the Hist. Dulcini, p. 435., has novem reges: the Additamentum, p. 453., reges novos.

false church, Frederic would proceed to the organisation of the true one; the disciples of Sagarelli would now step out of the lurking places to which the malignity of their foes had driven them. God would himself appoint his own Pope: the whole world would be converted to the doctrine of the Apostles: and the emperor and the nine kings, together with the new Pope, would rule peaceably over the earth for three and a half years, at the end of which period the millennium was to be ushered in, preceded and accompanied by all the phenomena which men were still so fain to see fore-determined in the book of Revelations.

The anonymous writer who gave the most minute particulars of Dolcino's soothsayings*, concludes with a triumphant remark, that he was writing on the 1st of May, of the year 1316,—sixteen years, that is, since the date of Dolcino's first epistle; and that the heresiarch had most undoubtedly written himself down a liar and impostor, since not one of the terrific events by him announced to the world had been witnessed; and the last term assigned to him for the realisation of his wicked dreams had long since elapsed.

§ 16. To what extent, however, Dolcino was really positive and precise as to the particulars of his prediction, especially with regard to time, may still, in our

* Additamentum ad Dulcini Hist., p. 455.

opinion, be considered debatable ground. We must ever bear in mind that all the information on this subject is afforded to us by men who cannot even disguise the temper by which they were actuated whilst writing; men who can never utter the name of these Apostles without designating them as the "accursed Cathari," without assuring us that "since Adam nothing was ever seen so execrable, so pestilential as this horrid sect;"* men, too, whom it is easy to convict of flagrant contradiction at least, if not deliberate falsehood. Of three epistles, we have said it, two only are produced, and even those not genuinely quoted, but abridged, and not unlikely garbled, with wilful omission of "such matter as seemed to the historian irrelevant."†

Now it is not easy for the most clear-sighted and unprejudiced critic, we will not say to decipher, but even to read, books of prophecy. The whole of mankind, as we know, saw in the pages of the New Testament the very plainest intimation that the world was to come to its end about the year 1000, and prepared themselves accordingly. The fatal year passed, and men put off the consummation of the inevitable

* "Postquam formatus fuit Adam, nulla secta reperta fuit tam execrabilis, tam abominabilis, tam horrenda," &c. Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

† Additamentum, p 450.

catastrophe from year to year, from age to age, ere they would admit the futility of their apprehension. Even acquitting Dolcino's historians of wilful perversion of his words, we may well presume that his real meaning was, as the last Book of the New Testament, somewhat misconceived or misrepresented. No man should be convicted except on his very words.

That he wished for the overthrow of the Church is clear enough; and with men of ardent disposition we know how easily desire begets hope, and this again hardens into faith. The combination of all circumstances, singularly enough, pointed to Frederic of Sicily as the hero of Joachim's prophecy. The coincidence of the date of Sagarelli's apostolate, and of Dolcino's own, afforded strong ground for the belief that his sect was to have no little share in the working out of God's hidden designs. It is possible, also, that a fond, mystic veneration for ternary numbers may have induced him to announce that the great revolution would be effected in three years: but we must yet doubt whether he could be so egregiously imprudent, or so utterly self-blinded, as to name any positive date, and still more so as to name so near a day: uttering thus assertions which the very morrow, as it were, might refute.

He who wrote in 1316, or any of those who lived down to 1337, could very easily laugh at any pre-

diction tending to the exaltation of Frederic of Sicily; for that king never extended his power beyond his own island, and the Popes of Avignon and their clergy followed their own wicked courses without any great uneasiness on his account: but Dolcino died in 1307; and, although he would have had to confess, in Dante's own words, that,

"By many a year the writing played him false," *

yet he could still with his dying breath reassert that the coming of Frederic, and his performance of the high deeds expected of him, was no less matter of necessity.

This may be set down as senseless obstinacy or stark impudence on his part, truly; but we must not overlook the fact that Dolcino died surrounded by many of his sectarians, all sharers of his hopes, all strenuous believers of his words. We are willing to admit that the faith of a fanaticised multitude is stronger than even the love of woman is said to be. We have not forgotten † that, in 1300, the disciples of that female Messiah, Wilhelmina of Bohemia, were cheerfully dying in the flames at Milan, to bear witness to the truth she taught, although not

* "Di parecchi anni mi mentii lo scritto."
DANTE, *Inferno*, xix. 86.

† *Antè*, chap. i. § 52.

one word had ever come to pass of what she was said to have prophesied, more than nineteen years before, respecting her death and resurrection, and her coming to judge the quick and the dead. But in the case of Dolcino the jugglery would have been too glaring and palpable. His fellow-sufferers would have seen every word of his prediction belied from year to year, and yet clung to him all the stronger the more shameless the assurance with which he played on their credulity.

By the words of his first epistle, Boniface VIII. was to be put to death, with all his clergy, both regular and secular, within three years after August, 1300. Now the Pope alone died and only in October, 1303; and not by the sword, but foaming at the mouth like a mad dog, perhaps strangled by his own hand in a fit of rage brought about by the indignities he had to endure at the hands of the Colonna, Nogaret, and other agents of Philip the Fair. Boniface died all but a violent death, truly, and that death inflicted by a monarch's resentment; but that monarch was not only not the one pointed out by the prophet, but was that very French tyrant who, together with the Princes of the House of Anjou,

* Ferreti Vicentini, Historia, lib. iii. Rer. Ital. tom. ix. p. 1008. Sismondi, Républ. Ital. tom. ii. p. 351.

was to be involved in the fate of Boniface himself, whilst the expected executor of God's mandates, Frederic of Sicily, had at that time made his peace with, and came forth as a champion of, the very pontiff he was appointed to overthrow.

In the teeth of so signal a failure, the prophet, we are told, merely shifts his ground. In his second letter, written in December of that same year, 1303, and without the least attempt to explain or palliate his discomfiture, he simply says that the fate which Boniface had so miraculously escaped was reserved for his successor. This latter he does not name, probably because the election of Benedict XI. was not yet known in Dalmatia, where Dolcino apparently dated from: he adds that the sentence of Heaven against him and against the cardinals his electors, and the exaltation of God's instrument, Frederic of Sicily, to the highest earthly dignity, would be effected within two years or little more, naming either the Christmas week, 1305, or the Lent of the following year. The ill-starred Benedict XI. did not even live through the short period assigned to him: he died, most probably, a violent death; for, unless it was from a surfeit of the sweet fruits of which he was too fond, then it must have been from some subtle drug with which his cardinals had them

seasoned for him*; but, at any rate, this happened in July, 1304, from which epoch to the following June, 1305, there was actually no Pope in Christendom, and after which Dolcino and his friends, shut up in the mountains, hardly ever knew how the fulfilment of prophecy was speeding. During all this period, too (1298—1308), the imperial sceptre, which was to fall to the lot of the Sicilian king, was still in the hands of Albert of Austria, who never indeed gave himself any concern about Italian matters, to the great vexation of Dante†; but who, although at first opposed by Boniface VIII., ended not only by reconciling himself with that pope, but even acknowledging the supremacy of the Roman See over the Empire, — an act which brought with it his acknowledgment by all the Italian potentates, and, we doubt not, by Frederic of Sicily himself. ‡

Well may Mosheim exclaim §, that "a prophet need be as insensible to shame as a beggar; and Dolcino was professedly both." But Mosheim, too apprehensive that his Protestant tendencies may betray him into injustice to Catholic authorities in a work on heresy which he emphatically styles impar-

* Ferreti Vicentini, lib. iii. p. 1013.

† Dante, *Purgatory*, vi. 98.

‡ Coxe, House of Austria, vol. i. chap. vi.

§ Geschichte des Apostelordens, lib. i. § xxii.

tial*, accepts the assertions of Dolcino's accusers with too little discrimination. The fact is, however, that, like an astrologer, Dolcino drew his horoscope according to the aspects of the political firmament around him, and also in consonance with previous oracles held in universal veneration. The conclusion he came to on these data, may indeed have been delivered with a confidence which proved irresistible to his hearers, but scarcely, we should think, with any decided claims to infallibility. The evidence of God's wrath against the Church, so manifest in the violent death of two successive pontiffs, must have contributed to render Dolcino's predictions matter of great weight, even in their partial miscarriage. His believers might be somewhat staggered, but had no reason to be wholly disheartened. The final doom of the establishment was, however slowly, surely maturing; and their leader had certainly caught a glimpse of the truth, even though he had not actually seen God face to face.

§ 17. We have dwelt so long on the probable nature of Dolcino's prophecies, because we apprehend that in these alone, or at least mainly, lay the offence of these unhappy sectarians. The Church dreaded ill-omens; nor were her fears groundless. With Boniface

* Versuch einer *unparteiischen* und gründlichen Ketzergeschichte.

VIII., the Papal power, which had proved irresistible during previous centuries, was at last setting, and for ever. Ecclesiastical pride was sure to have a fall; and no man, at that time, could measure the depth of it. A total subversion seemed almost inevitable; and nothing, in that as well as in any successive epoch, could have power to avert it, except the interested motives of wicked monarchs. The Church was aware of its danger, and knew that these croaking mendicants hastened the impending evil.

This may explain the facility with which sorcery, necromancy, and all manner of Black Art were, by the inquisition of the middle ages, readily confounded with heresy. The gift of divination, by all human and superhuman means, never was in higher credit. The very cobblers at the street corners — witness Asdente, of Parma, agreeably to Dante*, left "their thread and cordwain" to busy themselves with the fate of pontiffs and monarchs of the earth (A.D. 1280). Even in the opinion of the poet, himself a prophet,

——— "Asdente
Che aveve atteso al cuoio ed allo spago
Ora vorrebbe, ma tardi di pente."

DANTE, *Inferno*, canto xx. 116.

See also his Convito, v. 179.; and Affò, Storia di Parma, tom. iv. p. 39. 59., who gives some interesting particulars respecting the prophetic shoemaker.

the soothsayer was, to say the least, guilty of impious presumption; and he dooms those who —

"too far
Before them wished to see,"

to "look backward" in hell, and

"Tread reverse their path." *

But the Church held, or attempted to hold, all divination as allied to misbelief. The "poor men" of the Alps perished in the flames, as guilty of the black art, which, from their name, was designated as *Vauderie*.† Witchcraft was equally imputed to the Albigenses, the Cathari, and the Templars; and, it would seem, also to our Apostles, since Dolcino's sister, the beautiful Margaret, of Trent, is purposely exonerated from any complicity in that particular guilt.‡ The identity of punishment engendered among the ignorant multitude the notion of similarity

* "Perchè volle veder troppo davante
Dirietro guarda e fa ritroso calle."

DANTE, canto xx. 36.

† Bert. I Valdesi, chap. ii. p. 40.

‡ "Margarita, non tam malefica quam hæretica consors ejus." Bernard. Guidon. in Vit. Clement. V. Rer. Ital. tom. iii. p. 674. *Maleficus* was the word used for magic: and the Papal Biographer would seem to consider Margaret as a sharer only of the errors of Dolcino, not of his darkest crimes of sorcery. But Ptolemaus Lucensis, Hist. Ecclesiast. cap. xxiv. Rer. Italic. tom. ix. p. 1228., calls her "Margaretam maleficam et necromanticam." See Baluz. Vitæ. Papar. Avenionens. tom. i. p. 26 and 67.

of offence. The astrologer, indeed, was in some instances led to the stake as a predestinarian. Poor Cecco d'Ascoli, for one, thus perished at Florence, in 1327. He was a poet, and distinguished himself by a certain rivalry and, as some have thought, malice towards Dante: but he was especially an astronomer, and in that capacity he had been entertained at the court of John XXII., and of Charles Lack-land, Duke of Calabria; he also filled the chair of his science in several Italian universities, especially at Bologna. He had reached his seventieth year, and possessed great reputation for his proficiency in the occult sciences. Like every star-gazer in his times, Cecco conceived that every man was under the irresistible influence of the stars that presided over his nativity. Prescience of the future implies a belief in fatalism. The astrologer was tested as to the free-will of Christ and Antichrist; and he was consistent enough to say that neither of them could depart from the line that was eternally traced out for him: that the one could not but have been a Saviour, the other a destroyer of mankind: a blasphemy which cost him his life.*

§ 18. But besides these hostile feelings to the

* Dictionn. des Hérésies, or Ketzerlexicon, art. Cæcus Asculanus. Bernini, Storia di tutte l'heresie. Venice, 1717, tom. iii. p. 449, 450.

Church of Rome, and the desperate confidence with which they anticipated its ruin, but which, however, implied no actual deviation from its doctrines, the Apostles were also accused of holding some of the tenets of the Cathari, and being, therefore, tainted with those errors which it was then the fashion to trace to ancient Manichæism.

We have so frequently mentioned this word, and so much meaning was in reality attached to it in the Middle Ages, that we deem it necessary to attempt a definition of it.

Manichæism was, in its origin, merely an error of natural theology. It had risen in regions to which no light of Hebrew revelation had ever penetrated, possibly in ages anterior to the earliest Mosaic records. It did not, perhaps, positively amount to a denial of the unity of God. It merely supposed the existence of two antagonistic principles: the one it called spirit — light — good; the other, matter — darkness — evil. These were by some deemed co-existent, co-eternal, self-created; but others, again, conceived them to be the offspring of a higher Being — a God the Father — immeasurably removed from human ken, who, from some inscrutable, providential motive of his own, had endowed these two elements with a hostile activity, and was calmly contemplating the chances of the conflict between them. Launched

thus into the arena of boundless space, these two irreconcilable brothers had laboured to the procreation of congenial auxiliaries. Ahrimane, the evil demon, had heaped up a huge mass of formless matter, and entrenched himself in impenetrable gloom: Ormuzd, or the genius of good, had encompassed himself with myriads of spirits, made in his own image — the human souls,—and darted them, like so many arrows, against that citadel of chaos. The two principles had thus come to a close engagement, which began with the existence of this visible world, and is only to end with it. Spirit has penetrated matter; it has informed and animated it, and is to end by subduing it, by utterly spiritualising it. For the Supreme Deity had preordained a happy issue of the great contest. The forces of the two camps are not so nicely balanced but that the better part may not have a constant, decided, however scarcely perceptible, advantage — sure to lead, at some indefinitely distant period, to certain and complete victory.

We do not conceive that any man could be burnt alive at this present age, for entertaining such sublime and consoling theories. Such doctrines, in fact, do not seem, in any essential point, repugnant to the great moral law, which, according to all religious revelation, is supposed to govern the world. The existence of evil, under the express sanction of a good

and wise, and yet almighty Providence, a perpetual battle of the spirit with the flesh, lies at the basis of Christianity; and a man is either a son of God or the Devil, according as the soul or the body asserts its ascendency over him.

Some of the various sects of the Gnostics at the very dawn of Christianity, and Mani or Manes towards the end of its third century, first attempted the application of those doctrines to the Gospel of Christ, the former deriving their knowledge more immediately from the religion of Zoroaster, the latter adding to this some of the tenets more peculiar to Buddhism.* All of them, however, and Manes and his followers, the so-called Manichæans especially, in a vain anxiety to explain every thing, to account for every thing, so fondly refined upon what was originally pure and intelligible, they launched into so many wild, abstruse, idle speculations, especially with regard to the mystery of the incarnation of Christ, his death and resurrection, all of which they looked upon as un-real and symbolical—and about the final resurrection of the body, a doctrine which clashed with their views of the ultimate destruction of all matter —and with respect to the Old Testament, which, together with some chapters of the New, they rejected

* Neander, Church Hist. vol. ii. sect. iv., and the Appendix to it, p. 170—195.

as the work of the evil spirit—as to arrive at conclusions which were possibly impious in themselves, and admitted, at any rate, of the most dangerous application.

§ 19. Of these errors, and of these practices, it was, at all times, found impossible to cure Christianity. Manichæism, that is, an endless variety of dogmas that were dignified by that name, after lying dormant for several centuries, burst forth afresh in the eighth and ninth centuries among the Paulicians in the East, a sect, whose errors were, however, at variance and actually conflicting with those of Manes *, and, as we have seen, passed hence into the West amongst the various heretics of Italy and France.

This connection between the Paulicians and some of the Italian sects of the Middle Ages is, however, rather assumed than satisfactorily demonstrated. Together with most modern writers, Hallam † considers it as established "beyond a doubt." He founds his arguments, however, mainly on the appellation of Bulgarians, which was distinctly bestowed upon some of the Albigensian sects, and upon a fact resting on the testimony of Matthew Paris ‡, that they acknow-

* Neander Church Hist. vol. v. sect. iv. § iii., p. 337–354.

† Hallam, Middle Ages. chap. ix. part II. vol. ii. p. 441.

‡ Matthew Paris, Hist. Major. p. 267. ad ann. 1223.

ledged a primate or patriarch, resident on the frontiers of Bulgaria, Croatia, and Dalmatia. But the election of this pope or antipope is referred to in the year 1223; and the name of Boulgres or Bulgarians, as well as that of Cathari or Gazari, which Mosheim would also trace to some Eastern national denomination *, only rose in the twelfth or thirteenth century, when the intercourse between the East and West, consequent on the expeditions of Palestine, may either have favoured the importation of new doctrines into France and Italy, or at least the modification of the old ones. But there were, as we have seen, earlier sects at Orleans, Arras, and Monforte, which made their appearance early in the eleventh century, that is, many years before the first Crusade, which were not generally designated as Manichæan, and whose derivation could not be easily traced to the Paulicians.†

The several French congregations merely owed their origin to Italian propagandism; and the earliest Italian sect known, that of Monforte, the one, too,

* Mosheim, Geschichte des Apostel-ordens, note 7.; and see *antè*, chap. i. § 14.

† Neander, Church Hist. period iv. sect. iv., § iv., vol. vi. p. 349, 358. Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 393., and note Of the Italian sect, their historian says, "Ipsi a qua orbis parte in Italiam fuissent eventi, inscii. Landulph. senior, Hist. Mediolan. lib. ii. cap. xxvii.; Rer. Ital. Script. tom. iv. p. 88.

about which we have the most distinct particulars, made no avowal of such Eastern descent. Their teacher, Gherard, declared "that they had a pontiff, not him of Rome, but another, who daily visited their brethren scattered through the world*;" by which words we understand that, like most Protestants of our own days, they acknowledged no other supreme Chief of the Church than Christ and his Holy Spirit; nor should we be surprised, if the Bulgarian pontiff said to have been elected in 1223, by the sects of Languedoc, and whose name, Bartholomew, is given, had been nothing else but an ideal personage, under whom the Divine Spiritual chief was symbolised.

All this, however, is somewhat extraneous to the present subject. The Apostles of Sagarelli and Dolcino had, most certainly, nothing in common with the main dogma of Manichæism. Amongst their tenets, such as they came down to us through their enemies' hands, there occurs no mention of the two principles; no denial of the reality of Christ's body, or of the final resurrection; no rejection of any part of Holy Writ. But amongst them, as well as among the Albigenses and Cathari, and the sects which preceded these, and the Brethren of the Free

* "Pontificem habemus, non illum Romanum, sed alium, qui quotidie per orbem terrarum fratres nostros visitat dispersos." Landulph. senior, Hist. Mediol. vol. i. cap. i.

Spirit, the Beghards and Fraticelli, who rose about the same period, doctrines are found which have been referred to Manichæism, though they do not essentially and exclusively belong to it. Most of these doctrines are purely mystic and ascetic, such as have been at all times wound up with the most rigid and orthodox Christianity.

§ 20. The Apostles were mystical; they rejected, or at least deemed unimportant, all forms of external worship. They conceived, and expressed their views in a language unnecessarily strong and coarse, that a consecrated church is of no greater worth, as a place of worship, than a horse-stable or a pig-stye; and that Christ could be worshipped in the woods fully as well as in churches*; that a life of holiness, of chastity and self-denial is all the more meritorious if it be observed without the restraint of an irrevocable vow.† Finally, they professed to live under no bond of external discipline, merely in obedience to an inward instinct of subordination to superior grace.‡

The Apostles were, besides, ascetical. Theirs was a life of privation and penitence, of squalor and

* See Tenets of the Apostles, art. 18, 19. Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 457.

† Art. 17.

‡ See Dulc. Epistles, in Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 450. and 454.

gloom: they practised severe fasts, and doomed themselves to the strictest celibacy.

These few articles constituted all the ground of their real and imaginary offence. Like all other mystics of ancient and modern times, they made religion to consist exclusively in internal worship, with utter contempt of rites and ceremonies, with utter disregard of formal discipline. They held that, by rigid mortification, by intense contemplation, the soul could be so lifted up, so absorbed, as to become identified with God, in which state it would be inaccessible to sin, proof against temptation. All perfection, for them, lay in the utter emancipation of the spirit from the flesh.

These ideas may originally have sprung from that Eastern Dualism, upon which the dogma of Manes was supposed to rest: as they certainly evince a desire on the part of the human soul to aid in the great battle of the spirit-world against the world of matter, by the utter subjugation of that part of matter in which, agreeably to the great Providential scheme, it is temporarily imprisoned: but they, at the same time, contain nothing repugnant to the Christian dogma; and the Brethren of the Free Spirit, when they maintained that a perfect man could be, by intense communion with God, made superior to all the rules of monastic discipline, and

all other merely human institutions, — when they made light of the sacraments, of baptism, and the Last Supper—thought they could refer to the authority of the Apostle Paul *, and upheld their notions by a chain of arguments which are accepted as sound and conclusive by many an honest sectarian of the present day.

§ 21. But out of these doctrines, harmless and perhaps holy in themselves, the Apostles and all kindred sects, were accused of making a loose and flagitious rule of life; they were charged, not merely with occasional and individual incontinence, but with deliberate profligacy and villany: their scheme of religion was so calculated as to sanction and systematise all manner of infamous vice.

The Apostles condemned matrimony and all sexual intercourse.

On economical and hygienic, no less than moral, ground, chastity has always been a primary virtue in the East, and in all countries where a hot climate exercises too strong an influence over the passions. The ascetics of primitive Christianity had made it the Christian virtue par excellence. By a principle analogous to that of the Teetotallers of our own times, they thought that men could only be bound to temperance by a pledge of utter abstinence. Hence

* Rom. viii. 2–14.

the myriads of Anchorites and Cœnobites, the holy virgins which the Church numbered among her saints.

But celibacy, as it was at first understood, was an exceptional state; a privilege, as it were, of the happy few, an unnatural stretch of self-denial to which the Church neither intended nor expected that the generality of mankind should be forced.

But there were sects, it was said, that over-stepped all the Church's just and moderate views: there were fanatics, who enjoined absolute chastity on all their followers, and that on dogmatic grounds. The Manichæans aimed at the emancipation of mankind by its extinction. Since all evil was in matter, and all sin in the flesh, they said, it was clear that redemption could be best achieved by a universal, though not violent suicide of our race. Not a few sects, especially among the early Gnostics and Manichæans, were supposed to entertain this destructive notion: from the Abelites of the fourth century in Africa, who took their name from Abel, the first bachelor, as they fancied, in human records*, down to the Shaker communities of North America, who strictly adhere to it at the present time.

With the exception of the very ancient, and of the

* Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manicheisme, liv. vii. chap. iii. Buck's Theological Dictionary, art. Abelites, Shakers, &c.

very modern sects just named, however, it does not clearly appear that such was invariably the aim of Manichæism. Some of the sects bearing that name, far from wishing for the destruction, seemed, on the contrary, to believe in the indefinite improvement of mankind here below. The heretics of Monforte, amongst many others, expected a happy day, in which the human race, after the utter defeat of the common purposes of nature by the total discontinuance of matrimony, should be propagated by some miraculous means.*

Moreover, nearly all these sects admitted of two or more ranks among their votaries: they all had their "elect" or "perfect men," and their mere "believers or auditors." Of these, the former alone were bound to conform to the strictest rule of their institution, whilst allowance, as it is natural to infer, was made for the frailty of the latter.

§ 22. Considered under such a point of view, and supposing that they put off the ultimate improvement of the whole race to an indefinite period, what else was the "chastity" which was made a theme of reproach to the Manichæans, save only something like the celibacy of the clergy, which the Church of

* "Sicut apes, sine coitu, genus humanum gigneretur." Landulph. senior, Hist. Mediolanens. lib. ii. cap. xxvii.; Rer. Ital. tom. iv. p. 88.

Rome, about this same epoch, had been making strictly obligatory? It is a fact of the very greatest importance, that, in the eleventh century, Gregory VII., Peter Damianus, and other zealous disciplinarians, who strove so hard, and succeeded in the end, in forbidding the marriage, or, as they called it, the concubinate of the priests, in the north of Italy and beyond the Alps, were, by their adversaries, looked upon as Manichæan innovators; and designated in Lombardy under the name of Paterini, a word which was then made synonymous with Manichæan, and was first applied to the strictest Romanists, because the inveterate hatred which they evinced against the holy tie of wedlock was by the honest Lombard priests, and by their adherents, construed into an undue stretch of Manichæan asceticism *: as, indeed, the Church herself was wont to consider all excess of zeal, all fasting and praying extraordinary, total abstinence from animal food; nay, the mere paleness supposed to result from such exaggerated devotional practices, as a sure index of the abhorred heresy, and to send such fanatics to the stake accordingly.†

But there was an orthodox and a heterodox asce-

* Arnulph. Hist. Mediolanens. lib. iii. cap. xxiv., lib. iv. cap. vi.; Rer. Italic. Script. tom. iv, p. 24., seq.

† See *antè*, chap. i. § 8.

ticism, as there was a Catholic and a heretic dogma; and Rome would not allow any man to be a saint without her permission.

§ 23. For what more immediately concerns our subject, it is not easy to state whether or not Dolcino went the whole length of the Abelites and Shakers. He taught*, that it had been good for men living under the rule of the Old Testament to marry and multiply their race: that in the second epoch, or under the Christian dispensation, single life, as Paul seemed to understand it†, was better than the married state. The natural inference from this would be, that in the new era, or that of the Holy Ghost, chastity, like all ascetic virtues, should attain perfection, and become absolute and universal.

But whatever might be his ultimate expectation as to the future, Dolcino could not hope or wish, at first, to people the world with apostles. To such of his followers as aspired to that proud denomination, the apostolic virtues were inexorably enjoined: but these were only the elect, the heralds of the new gospel: the same severe rule was not, perhaps, applicable to the multitude of their believers. These latter were supposed, with no good reason, as we shall see, to live together in a promiscuous inter-

* Dolcino's Epistle, in Additam. p. 451.

† 1 Cor. vii. 29.

course, in a "community of goods, and community of women."

We come now, in fact, to the main ground of their enemies' ill-report against them. It was not so much the exaggerated puritanism, which, as reproachful to the laxity of the regular clergy, made both these and all other dissenters obnoxious, as the universally prevalent opinion that all their holiness was sheer hypocrisy — a mask for the indulgence of the most culpable excesses.

The accusation was as old as Christianity itself. So long as the earliest believers, under the pressure of persecution, enveloped their deeds in mystery and concealment, the darkest, the most odious surmises were rife against them among the pagans: and the evil reports spread against the Carpocratians, Marcionites, and other Gnostic sects by the orthodox, and retorted against these by the dissenters, gave sufficient ground for the worst misconceptions.* The rancour and ill-will of Christians against Christians only increased with the prosperous spread of their faith, and the Manichæans especially, or those who were designated as such, at all times came in for the most atrocious charges on the part of their brethren.

"At certain times," it was said of the sectarians

* Gibbon, Decline and Fall, chap. xvi.

of Orleans, in 1022 *, and has been confidently repeated of a hundred other sects in all ages and countries, as nearly as possible in the same words, " the heretics met together by night, each with a lighted torch, and invoked the Devil till he made his appearance. Then putting out all lights, they banished all shame, and disregarded the most sacred laws of Nature herself. The fruits of these horrid scenes, when eight days old, were murdered and burnt, and the ashes so obtained constituted their heavenly food, which was of such efficacy, that whoever partook of it at all, became an enthusiast of their sect, and could seldom ever afterwards be recovered to a sound mind."

It would be of little matter to repeat, that stories of this nature were got up and believed respecting the early Gnostics of the third century, respecting the disciples of Priscillian, in the fourth. There are men amongst the ignorant multitude in Germany and Italy, who will still piously treasure up such idle tales with regard to the Jews of the present day. At Mantua or Leghorn, the notion that the Israelites are bound to celebrate some decennial or centennial anniversary by the sacrifice of a Christian virgin is

* Glabrii Radulph. Hist. sui tempor. lib. iii. cap. viii. Duchesne, Rer. Franc. Script. tom. iv. p. 32., and see *antè*, chap. i. § 7.

still deeply-rooted in the popular mind; and grave personages have assured us at Frankfort, that it is enough to raise the formidable cry, "Hep! Hep! Hep!"* to send the whole fanatic mob to the Judengasse, there by murder and plunder to avenge some imaginary deed of bloodshed periodically supposed to stain the floor of the synagogue.

Nor is it merely all that is most atrocious and revolting that man at all times showed himself ready to believe of his fellow-man. The absurd and ludicrous comes in for its ample share of popular credulity. We have seen how irrefragably it was proved that the Stedingers and other heretics of Germany paid their worship to the Devil under the disguise of a toad. The Cathari, in Italy, were said to derive their name from some strange ceremony performed in honour of the same evil spirit, who appeared to them under the shape of a black cat.† The same tom-foolery figures conspicuously among the charges

* The initials H. E. P. (Hierosolyma est perdita) by which the zeal of the Crusaders was stirred up in the Middle Ages, and which was often the signal for a slaughter of the Jews. The convivial shout "Hip! Hip! Hurrah!" in England is referred to the same origin.

† "Quia osculabantur posteriora catti, in cujus specie, ut dicunt, apparet eis Lucifer." Alani, Contra Waldenses, lib. i. p. 4. in Gretzer's Scriptor. contra Waldenses, Ingoldstadt, 1613, quarto.

so triumphantly substantiated against the Templars, "on their own confession:" and Boniface VIII., who had also such familiars always about his person, was proved to have propitiated the Nether Gods in true classical style, by the sacrifice of a black cock.

§ 24. Our Apostles, as incarnate fiends, would appear to have scarcely needed any actual communication with the powers below. Not only had they invented, as it was believed, a religious scheme which removed all restraint on the impulse of passion, but they actually ministered to its flame by the incentive of constant, systematic temptation.

Here, again, the error, if it may be proved, must be traced to the primitive times of the Christian establishment. In the paramount importance they attached to the virtue of chastity, some of the earliest zealots did not follow the dictates of discretion. "A few of them, amongst whom we may reckon the learned Origen," says Gibbon, resting on the very best authorities *, "judged it most prudent to disarm the tempter: some were insensible, and some invincible against the assaults of the flesh. Disdaining an ignominious flight, the virgins of the warm climate of Africa encountered the enemy in the closest engagement. . . . . But insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights," &c. &c.

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, chap. xvi.

Of this most deplorable fool-hardiness the Apostles of Dolcino were said to have made themselves guilty. Dolcino* laid the greatest stress on that strength of mind which could purposely court such a temptation and come off victorious over it. Not only was it no sin to go through such a dangerous ordeal, but the continence exhibited under it implied a greater miracle than raising the dead.

Yet, the idea that virtue should be valued in accordance to the amount of danger to which it was exposed, found favour with fanatics, which the Church has not always disavowed. All monastic establishments were not prisons in which each sex pursued its own separate path towards perfection. The visits of pious monks to pious nuns were long encouraged, especially among the Benedictine communities. Promiscuous monasteries were also known up to the year 787, when they were interdicted by the Seventh General Council — the Second of Nice, — nor was even then the prohibition considered effectual. As late as the twelfth century the idea was revived in

* See Tenets of the Apostles. Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 457. Art. xv. "Item, quilibet homo et quælibet mulier nudi possunt jacere in uno et eodem lecto * * * * sine omni peccato: et conjungere * * * * * si quis stimuletur carnaliter, ut cesset temptatio, non est peccatum." Art. xvi. "Item, quod jacere cum muliere et non commisceri ex carnalitate majus est quam resuscitare mortuum."

France by Robert des Arbriscelles, the founder of the Order of Fontevrault, who not only harboured brethren and sisters under the same roof, but placed his whole establishment under the rule of an abbess, professedly — for what oddity has not sought its authority in the same quarter?— professedly in pursuance of the example of our Saviour, who commended St. John to the care of his mother, and wished him to look up to her with filial duty and submission.*

§ 25. The injunction of chastity anongst some of the Manichæans did not bind them to a formal vow of celibacy. The Abelites of the fourth century, or the Shakers of the nineteenth, anxious as they were that this wicked world should come to an end, did not, however, venture on the abolition of matrimony, seeing that the institution was too plainly hallowed by Christ himself; but they frustrated it by looking upon it merely as a holy spiritual union. Theirs was to be the wedded home to which no child is born; their family should receive no increase except by the adoption of the offspring of more sinful people; until by the conversion of all the races of mankind, the living should be the last of human generations.

Even such a bond of spirit would Dolcino's Apostles have established between them and their "sisters." The very name of marriage was pro-

* Abelard, Op. p. 38.

scribed amongst them. It was the boast of their leader that the most virtuous connection existed between himself and the beautiful Margaret of Trent. That "best beloved of all his disciples had lived with him like a sister in all holiness and purity." To all these protestations, it is true, human malignity would yield no belief. It was impudently asserted that, at the time of her apprehension, that sainted sister exhibited symptoms of approaching maternity; a taunt which Dolcino and his disciples refuted by saying that, had that really been the case, it must have come to pass through the interference of the Holy Ghost.*

That this connection between brothers and sisters was in all cases as blameless and holy as they wished the world to believe, no man in his senses would too confidently assert. A mode of life fraught with the same severe trials had been adopted by those apostolic sects which flourished in France about one century and a half before Dolcino came to his fate.† St. Bernard, who had undertaken to reclaim or to refute those enthusiasts, admonished them in a tone which does credit to his moderation, and strikes us as remarkably sensible for a saint. "This young

* "Secum ducebat Amasiam, nomine Margaritam, quam dicebat se tenere more sororis in Christo, provide et honeste: et quia fuit deprehensa esse gravida, ipse et sui asseruerunt esse gravidam de Spiritu Sancto."—Additam. p. 459.

† See *antè*, chap. i. § 17.

woman," says he, "who is always about you, day and night, she is no relation to you. You deem yourself safe with her; you wish us to understand that all is right between you; it may be so, friend, but—I have my suspicions."* This mixture of stark imprudence and consummate hypocrisy has at all times been reproached to all apostolical and other mendicant sects. The German Beghards, Beguins, and the Italian Fraticelli, though these latter as disciples of St. Francis ought to have had nothing to do with women, were also "sisterers:" they also held that virtue could be of no value while untried, and that no man should boast of perfection till he had flung himself into the flames of passion and come off unscathed.†

§ 26. But all this would yet be mere venial offence

* "Quotidie latus tuum ad latus juvenculæ est in mensa; lectus tuum ad lectum ejus in camera; oculi tui ad oculos ejus in colloquio; manus tuæ ad manus ipsius in opere; et continens vis putari: Esto ut sis, sed ego suspicione non careo." Bernard. Serm. LXV. in Cantic. § 4. Oper. tom. i. p. 1495.

† "Dixit quod inter Beguinos communiter dicebatur quod in partibus Italiæ erant aliqui Fratisselli, et aliqui homines de pœnitentia qui erant de tale opinione, quod non reputabant esse perfectum aliquem nisi posset se ponere nudum cum muliere nuda et non perficeret actum carnalem." See the confession of a Beguin, Rufus de Einktagarella, before the Inquisition at Toulouse, in Limborch. Hist. Inquisit. Lib. Sententiarum, p. 381, 382.

if compared with the fundamental errors which were at all times attributed to Manichæism, and from which hardly a sect in the middle ages was pronounced entirely free. The Gnostics of the first century and the Brethren of the Free Spirit of the Thirteenth *, alike taught that the acts of the body have no connection with the soul, when this latter has been lifted up to immediate communion with God; that consequently all desires may be safely indulged, as there can be no moral difference in mere physical actions. Others held that a man can commit no sin except in so far as his thinking organs were concerned †; that instead of subduing the flesh by abstinence, it was a wiser course to blunt its cravings by satiety. Others again announced that the third era was now at hand; the age of the Holy Ghost; a law of love; when, for the sake of charity, not only was it no sin to grant a brother all he might ask, but it was actually a sin to deny him.‡

* Mosheim, Eccl. Hist. cent. i. part II. chap. v. § 7. and cent. xiii. part II. chap. v. § 11.

† "Quidam dicebant quod nullus poterat peccare ab umbilico et inferius."—Petr. Vall. Sarn. Hist. Albigens. Rer. Franc. Script. tom. xix. p. 5.

‡ "Tertia lex, quæ nunc est, est lex amoris, clementiæ, caritatis, ita, quicquid petatur sub nomine caritatis, quicquid sit illud, etiam actus fornicationis venereæ, absque peccato potest concedi petenti, immo nec potest licite denegari."—Con-

In the teeth of all such monkish assertions and all inquisitorial convictions, we do not hesitate to affirm that such were never the teachings of any sect. All we can believe is merely that some of the general theories of those Manichæan divines, by dint of unconscionable stretch and perversion, admitted of some such unfavourable interpretation, either on the part of a few vicious or ignorant individuals belonging to the sect, or more probably on that of their bigoted opponents. In the same manner Calvinism might be, and, we know, has been taken to task for that predestinarianism which, by throwing on God alone the responsibility of all human deeds, would free man from all moral restraint. We hold that no religious scheme, whether Christian or otherwise, was ever contrived, consciously and deliberately to advocate immorality; and that whenever, by refining on some abstruse topic, theology has ever come to conclusions warring with the better instincts of human nature, this latter has invariably recoiled from such conclusions; or at least come to some compromise by which the real mind of the Eternal Lawgiver should best be carried into effect. Collectively at least, man has always been better than his gods; and that because man's mission is progress, and it is in the

tinuat. Chron. Guil. de Nangis. in Dacherii Spicileg. veter. Scriptor. tom. iii. p. 59.

nature of all religions, as taught by priests, to be stationary: man's real sense of good is infinite, and all priestly scheme of morality is limited to time, accommodated to circumstances.

§ 27. There never, perhaps, was a more clear and flagrant instance of the abuse of reasoning, on which the Church grounded her proofs against heresy in the dark ages, than the very case of the sect of the Apostles which she destroyed by fire and sword in the year 1307. For the unsoundness of their doctrines was said to be manifestly seen in the looseness of their lives; and, by a strange confusion of cause and effect, the profligacy of their lives was taken for granted, as a necessary consequence of the doctrines they professed.

With the exception of the idle story about Margaret's pregnancy, which the sequel of this narrative will fully disprove, even if we deemed it unnecessary to revert to it in plain words, there is, we will not say no proof, but even no direct and positive assertion of dissoluteness in the manners of these Apostles.

§ 28. Muratori, for instance, an historian who had no wish to meddle with theological questions, but who could hardly be superior to vulgar prejudices, testifies his surprise* that "no mention of licentiousness should

* "Quod mirere, Dulcini, ejusque sectatorum effusa licentia in abominandam quamque libidinem a scriptore hujus opusculi

occur amongst the errors and crimes enumerated" in the contemporary "history of Dolcino," which he gives into light. He adds, that "doubtless fame has always greatly aggravated the guilt of heretics of this description:" as, however, he concludes, "Dolcino held some of the tenets of the Gnostics and Manichæans, who allowed full indulgence in all disgraceful excesses, so consequently, Eymeric and other writers were justified in their statement that all things, even wives, were looked upon as common property among his disciples; for well we know, that nowhere does so large a crowd of men and women eagerly flock to hear these perverters of the Catholic dogma, as when they, under the semblance of piety, allow full scope for the gratification of evil passions."

Now, there are grave and conscientious divines, —

minime inter ejus errores et crimina recensetur. Et sane horum hominum genus et scelera, plus æquo fama interdum onerare consuevit. Attamen quum Dulcinus ejusque schola principiis quibusdam uterentur quæ Gnosticis olim et Manichæis fuere communia, et e quibus fluebat impunitas ad omnia luxuriæ inquinamenta, nemo neget, quin fides facile habenda sit supra laudato Eymerico, de iis scribenti, *omnia communia esse docebant etiam uxores.* Sanctus quoque Antonius, part 3. tit. 21. cap. 1. Bernardus Lucemburgensis, Blondus, aliique idem confirmant. Nunquam enim ad hosce Catholicæ doctrinæ novatores et corruptores tam studiose turba virorum ac mulierum confluit, quam quum sub specie pietatis libidini aliisque vitiis porta recluditur." Muratori, in Dulc. Hist. Præfatio Rer. Ital. tom. ix. p. 426.

Mosheim amongst others*, who do not find anything like Gnosticism or Manichæism amongst Dolcino's articles of belief; and although we opine that those fatal articles XV. and XVI. may be looked upon as not belonging to the purest Christianity, we can find no argument to induce us to believe that they were ever put into, or intended for, actual practice. What allurements of luxury and debauchery Dolcino could hold out to his militant, mendicant brotherhood, to drag multitudes of males and females in his suite, will be made apparent by what remains to be told of his sorrowful tale. Meanwhile, it is well to observe, it was not merely in this case; but out of thousands and thousands of Fraticelli, Beghards, and Beguins, who were brought to the stake in the thirteenth and fourteenth century — two thousand Fraticelli alone perished in the flames—hardly one was ever seriously accused of acting up to the foul and corrupt code of morals they were said to have prescribed for themselves. Their pretended mask of hypocrisy was hardly ever taken from their faces†,—their boast of rigid virtue, of unshaken chastity, of purity unsullied amongst the flames, is seldom impugned, nay, very

* Geschichte des Apostel-ordens, Book III. § 1-3.

† "Asserentes mendaciter et fingentes se nullis carnis tentationibus molestari."—Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 460. This is one of the many instances of a plain assertion met with a flat negation.

often admitted by their tormentors; who, unable otherwise to account for it, gravely assert that it was the devil himself, who, no doubt, from reasons best known to himself, helped them in their sorest need, and so cooled their blood, so blunted their feelings, as to carry them safe through their fiercest experiments.*

But how far these said experiments were ventured upon has not been clearly stated. Dolcino himself does not go so far as to recommend a trial of continence as a meritorious action, always supposing the XV. and XVI. articles of his creed to be genuine, — though he does not deem it sinful. On the contrary, he qualifies a victory in a similar contest, as the "Miracle above all miracles," and there is no evidence of either himself or any of his disciples so far presuming on his valour as to engage in it.

So far as the sect of the Apostles is concerned, we must never lose sight of the fact, that not the least allusion to immoral practices as being rife amongst them, occurs in the bulls of the Popes directed to the suppression of their order, in 1286 and 1290; that is, twenty-six and thirty years after its founda-

* "Credo quosdam ex eis dæmonis opere affectos fuisse ne moverentur ad naturales actus incontinentiæ: facillimum enim est dæmonibus infrigidare."—Nieder, Fornicarium, lib. iii. chap. v. p. 346.

tion; also, that no confession of similar guilt was extorted from Peter of Lugo, during the long and painful interrogatory which he underwent for two years, before that keen-searching inquisitorial tribunal at Toulouse, in 1320; that is, thirteen years after the dispersion of the sect in Italy. The idea that errors of that nature might be imputed to his sect, never fell into his own or into his questioner's minds.* The assertions of Eymeric, and other ecclesiastical authorities, must needs therefore rest on mere popular scandal; a scandal which arose from the real or supposed guilt of the many mendicant sects which arose at the same period and afterwards, and with which our Apostles had, doubtless, many things in common. The obvious contradiction and inconsistency of those assertions, too, will easily satisfy us of the vague and contemptible sources they sprang from: for Benvenuto da Imola, and after him many others†, stated that mothers and daughters were at least excepted from that "community of women" which was to be grounded on the new law

* Limborch, Hist. Inquisit. Liber Sententiarum, p. 361.

† "Quod omnia debebant communicare in caritate; et quod licebat omnibus uti mulieribus indifferenter, ita quod nullus concubitus erat damnatus nisi in matre et filia."—Benvenut. Imolens. in Dant. Comœd.; Muratori, Antiq. Italicæ, vol. i. p. 1121.

of charity, whilst Trithemius more stoutly asserts that "no such exception was made."*

The same and even worse horrors, it will be recollected†, were said with regard to that Tanquelin or Tanquelm who was followed by a vast multitude in the Flemish cities, in the earlier part of the twelfth century; and a connection between him and all the swarms of Beghards of the north, and Fraticelli of the south, is fondly traced out by men who were equally bent upon darkening the fame of all those sects‡; so that the guiltlessness of one of them being sufficiently established, will go far towards exonerating all of them from at least the grossest charges too heedlessly heaped upon them.

§ 29. Meanwhile, we are authorised to conclude with Limborch, a most accurate and conscientious critic, who went, perhaps, deeper into those inquisitorial researches than any writer of either Protestant or Catholic denomination, that the immorality of these Apostles rests on no better ground than that on which lay, equally from age to age, all imputations against

* "Coitum enim indifferenter cum matre, sorore, filia, et uxore sua vel alterius exercentes nullum dicebant esse peccatum sed opus caritatis."—Trithemius, Annal. Hirsaugienses, tom. ii. p. 103. St. Gallen, 1690.

† See *antè*, chap. i. § 20.

‡ Trithemius, loc. cit. p. 74.; Wadding. Annal. Minor. tom. vi. p. 288.

the Waldenses. Limborch's conclusion results especially from the depositions of Peter of Lugo before the ecclesiastical court of Toulouse, which he lays side by side with all that had been advanced by Eymeric and his commentator, and which he finds in all points, except this important one, coinciding.*

Were it possible to sift the evidence bearing on the guilt of these Apostles, in short, and of all the mendicant sects which sprang up with or from them, all of which were, like themselves, convicted of Manichæism; nay, were it in our power to tear asunder the veil that hides the mysteries of Gnosticism and Manichæism itself, in the same manner as time and common sense have enabled us to come to the truth for what concerns the harmless brethren of the Piedmontese valleys, we need hardly doubt that the real

* Dogmata quæ illis attribuit Eymericus magnam partem conveniunt cum iis quæ in sententia Petri Lucensis, ipsis attribuuntur, in volumine sententiarum, Inquisit. Tolosanæ, fol. 183. *excepto fœdo dogmate de promiscua Venere*, de quo ne minima quidem in sententia Petri Lucensis mentio. Unde evidenter colligimus illud de Apostolicis perinde atque de Waldensibus esse calumniam."—Limborch, Hist. Inquisit. p. 65-66. Also "Tribuuntur (Gherardo et Dulcino) quædam incommodæ sententiæ quin et promiscuæ libidines, quæ ut suspicor, magna ex parte, mendaciter à Pontificiis eis adscribuntur, sicut et Waldensibus promiscuas libidines falsissimæ Papistæ tribuunt." Mattheus Flacius, Catalogus Testium Veritatis, &c. &c., Frankfort, 1666. 4to. No. ccxcix.

offence would be found to lay less in the error or criminality of the heretic, than in the ignorance and fanaticism of the orthodox.

§ 30. The communism of Dolcino's Apostles,—and it is important to observe, that religion very often developed that tendency in Italy, whether under Papal sanction or in opposition to it, — was absolutely nothing else than a universal renunciation of property, an inexorable mortification of life. "Community of goods," resolved itself into the strictest equality of destitution. "Community of wives," implied a breaking up of all domestic ties, a condemnation of all the most sacred affections. This same communism, that is, utter expropriation and self-extinction, was professed in Italy by the heretics of Monforte as early as the beginning of the eleventh century*, who, like the Apostles, cohabited with "sisters," and reconciled matrimony with virginity; and who might, nevertheless, never have heard of Manes, or his doctrines. Like Francis of Assisi, whom these Apostles, together with, perhaps, millions of "brotherlets of the poor life," held up as the great pattern of Christian perfection, they condemned collective, no less than individual possession; they did not share the goods of the earth among them, they spurned them

* Landulph Senior. Hist. Mediolanens. lib. ii. cap. xxvii. Rer. Ital. tom. iv. p. 88., and see *antè*, chap. i. § 8.

utterly, except inasmuch as their daily sustenance rendered them strictly necessary, and no more. In the same manner women were not common property, they belonged to none of them, except by a bond of spiritual union — a Shaker marriage — a sisterhood.

Such doctrines, as they demand too much from human frailty, may often have been violated or baffled: they may have added to the dangers that encompass us, they may have lent a convenient cloak to vice. A rash, foolish, improvident mode of life it was that asceticism, whether Franciscan or Dolcinian, held up for the veneration of mankind. Happily for Dolcino, however, his own sect had no leisure for degeneracy or corruption. But few, if any, of the sweets of life were ever within their reach. The world held them strictly to their profession. They had chosen a life of privation and tribulation; their lot was that of utter want and misery. Through every stage of hardship and suffering, through every degree of horrid starvation, against ruthless enemies, under the dire inclemencies of nature, they had to fight their way to the crown of martyrdom. If these were the men of Belial, as their enemies inform us *, assuredly, at no time, in no country, did the devil do less for his servants.

* Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 455.

CHAPTER IV.

1. Dolcino's real Views.—2. Sagarelli and Dolcino.—3. The Heretic and the Patriot. — 4. Dolcino's Plans. — 5. His Battle-field. — 6. Persecutions against him. — 7. Dolcino's Enemies. — The Bishops of Vercelli. — The Avogadro Family. — Guelphs and Ghibelines.— 8. Crusade against the Apostles. — 9. Dolcino's first Escape. — his first Success. — 10. Excesses committed by the Heretics — their Causes — their real Nature. — 11. Their Distress. — 12. Dolcino shifts his Camp. — 13. Attack upon Trivero. — 14. Forces raised against him. — 15. Dolcino's Genius — his Stratagems. — 16. New Efforts of his Adversaries. — 17. Character of Mediæval Warfare. — 18. New and signal Victory of Dolcino. — 19. Dolcino Master of the Battle-field — his Situation. — Position of his Enemies. — 20. New Distress of Dolcino — his Conduct examined — his Sacrileges. — 21. His Cruelties. — Nature of the Evidence against him — his real Motives of Action. — 22. Ferocity of the Age. — 23. The Apostles driven to extremities. — 24. Renewal of Hostilities. — Last Encounter. — Defeat and Extermination of Dolcino's Sect. — Capture of the Leaders. — 25. Character of Alpine Warfare. — 26. Spanish and Italian Guerillas. — Dolcino and Garibaldi. — 27. The real Strength of Italy.

§ 1. From the epoch of Dolcino's re-appearance in the north of Italy, in 1304, to that of his melancholy end in 1307, the narrative of his anonymous historian proceeds with sufficient distinctness and continuity.

On two points only the subject remains involved in hopeless obscurity, and these are, to a certain extent, dependent on one another.

In the first place, what hopes or designs brought

the heresiarch back to the scenes of his former danger?

Secondly, how far can he be said to have acted in good faith, to have been the dupe of his own enthusiasm?

We know not at what age Dolcino died; consequently, neither can we tell the precise period of his life at which he first dedicated himself to his mission. He stated in his last confession, that he had held the same faith for the last sixteen years, but that does not necessarily mean that he had actually joined, or even heard of Sagarelli's sect at the period thus designated, that is, in 1291. Strictly speaking, the creed of Sagarelli's apostles amounted to little else, besides hatred against the court of Rome; and by how many other persons, sects, and parties was not such a feeling entertained at that time in the north of Italy? In the bosom of the Church itself, and more so among the people, anti-papal notions were still cherished in Lombardy, owing especially to that question of the marriage of the priests, which Gregory VII. had rather hushed up than settled. As the son of a priest and the ward and pupil of another, Dolcino must have shared such animosities at his very birth and early training. After his first mishaps in his guardian's house, at Vercelli, he took refuge at Trent, and in the mountains of Bergamo and Brescia,

where the spirit of that daring Arnold, who took his name from the latter city, was still abroad; that Arnold who so nearly overcame both episcopal and papal power in the twelfth century.* If Dolcino's reminiscences went no further back than 1291, and if we are to take that as the date of his first flight from Vercelli, we think, that as the son and pupil of "concubinarian" priests, and as an Arnoldist, he was justified in his assertion of a coincidence of belief with Sagarelli, even if he had no actual connection with him.

§ 2. It does not appear that Dolcino ever went to Parma, or that he had any interview with his single-hearted precursor; nor is it stated at what time he fell in with the missionaries, which the latter sent out to evangelise the world. As a pope-hater and a patriot, Dolcino required no affiliation into any sect or party. He was so by the nature of all circumstances. A high-minded Italian, at that epoch — witness Dante, who was born and brought up a Guelph, and was driven into the ranks of the opposite party — could hardly help being a Ghibeline. The Church party, backed by all the might of France, had grown insolent by success: hence a reaction in favour of Imperialism; a reaction which enabled Henry VII. of Luxemburgh, only two years after

* See *antè*, chap. i. § 32.

Dolcino's death, to march triumphantly throughout Italy, without an army, and with no other support than popular opinion; a reaction which would have been complete, and would have changed the face of the world, without the sudden and early and perhaps violent death of that Emperor.

§ 3. As a sharer of the most advanced ideas of Ghibelinism, Dolcino must have sought his friends anywhere amongst the Pope's enemies. He heard of the Apostles and their doctrines, it little matters how, or at what time; he coupled the date of Sagarelli's first rise, in 1260, with that assigned for the fulfilment of Joachim's alleged prophecies. On these, and on the great plausibility accruing to them from the general aspect of the political world, he grounded his own predictions, and dwelt on them with the fondness of a man of warm and sanguine imagination. He joined this sect, as he would have joined the Fraticelli (and there is, in fact, good ground to think that he began by this, and put on at first a Franciscan, or other monkish frock *) or any other which promised to become instrumental in the world's

* "Cœpit fundare novam sectam, in habitu fraticelli sine ordine."—Benvenut. Imolens. p. 1121. Also, Villani, Ist. Fioren. lib. viii. cap. lxxiv. p. 383., &c. &c. Schlosser, Abailard and Dulcin. p. 7. See appendix at the end of this volume, B. Dolcino's portraits, and other particulars.

deliverance. From his first entrance into it, and much more from his assumption of supreme power, after Sagarelli's death, in 1300, a new soul was breathed into the heart of his companions. The sect assumed a new tone and attitude.

Sagarelli had laid no claim to prophetic gifts. All revelations began with his more gifted successor. A body of men, who had been at first united by a religious bond, developed, under Dolcino, a political aim. Two distinct objects became through him indivisible. The success of the Apostles implied not only the reformation of the Church, but also the reorganisation of Italy: not only the overthrow of the papacy, but also the restoration of monarchy. To realise Dolcino's view, it was necessary that a great Ghibeline potentate, that the last of the Swabians, Frederic of Sicily, should come by his own; that he should, with the Church, humble also the Church party, the Guelphs, and the houses of Anjou and France, which had given that party an undue ascendancy all over Europe.

With some very slight modifications as to persons, Dolcino's scheme will be found to be absolutely the same as Dante's.

Consequently was it of the utmost importance to Dolcino to keep strictly within the pale of orthodoxy. The Apostles have been described as foes to the Pope

and clergy, and especially to the monastic orders. They were, however, or at least strove to be, rigid Catholics both as to dogma and discipline. Their ideal of a Church comprehended the whole Roman hierarchy as it then existed. They quarrelled with the persons of the rulers of the Church, but not with their office. This we stated because some critics* have denied that the Apostles had anything in common with the Fraticelli and dissenting Franciscans in general. Sagarelli's disciples, it is urged, were especially bitter against the monks. Yes, against the false monks, as against false pontiffs and bishops; but, for the rest, Benedict, Dominic, and Francis were Dolcino's angels and saints. It was only because their fraternities were so different from what they should have been that Dolcino, like Dante, wished not by any means to destroy or suppress, but to reform them. The present clergy, both secular and regular, was indeed to be smitten with the sword, but only to make room for another organised on the same plan, but more true to its apostolical institution.

§ 4. Towards the accomplishment of so thorough a revolution as he contemplated, Dolcino felt that his followers could do nothing except by moral persuasion. The Apostles were men of peace. Like

* Mosheim, Geschichte des Apostel-ordens, note ix.

most Manichæans, like the Waldenses, and the Quakers, they held the use of carnal weapons inconsistent with Christianity, at least with a Christian ministry. Independent of principle, they were also by nature no fighters; they mostly sprang from the lower ranks, at a time in which the trade of arms was monopolised by the feudal and knightly orders. As armed champions they could not greatly have aided the good cause; they were merely to begin by the Word, what Frederic and the Ghibelines would achieve with the sword. Sagarelli, therefore, and after him Dolcino, taught* that the Apostles were at first merely endowed with a weak and timid spirit, compelled to work in the dark, and hide from the wrath of their persecutors, and that, until the time in which their hero, Frederic of Sicily, should have acquitted himself of his own share of the task, when, under shelter of the eagle's wing, they would issue forth with the good strength and daring which animated the primitive apostles after the descent of the Spirit.

Until that time they would have been satisfied with the part of preachers, if the world had only, if not listened to them, at least allowed them freedom of speech. But even all their peacefulness, caution, and meekness availed them not. Concealment and

* Addit. ad Dulc. Hist. p. 458.

flight had not saved Sagarelli from imprisonment and death: nor had equivocation, and even perjury, better served the purpose of Dolcino himself. This latter had even tried to quit Italy, but found, most probably, no safe refuge abroad. We, at least, do not know in what part of Dalmatia he might be perfectly undisturbed. It is, indeed, stated that, ever since the ninth century, the whole of that province, and especially the peninsula of Stagno, near Ragusa, were swarming with Arians and Patarini; and that religion was only restored to its purity by the bishops, in 1333; that some of the Fraticelli remained unmolested in Cattaro down to 1321.* But similar assertions have been made with respect to many parts of Lombardy, wherever the Ghibeline party still held its ground; and especially in the northern part of those provinces of Novara and Vercelli where Dolcino soon made his appearance. The shelter these districts afforded to heresy was always precarious; and we know, at any rate, that some of Dolcino's fellow-labourers, the Fraticelli, could find no resting-place in the East, not even in uninhabited islands. Dolcino's return to Italy may, therefore, have been mere matter of necessity: it was, most probably, one of those measures which despair often suggests, urging

* Farlati, Illyricum sacrum, Venice, 1800. tom. vi. p. 328—330.

a man to change, even with no prospect of bettering his situation.

Possibly, however faint, some inducement was held out to him, either by great political persons or by humbler friends, with whom he had kept up some intercourse. We are told, on the one hand, that the powerful family of the Biandrate, and other Ghibeline chiefs were leagued with him; and on the other, that one Milano Sola, a rustic of Campertogno, in the Val di Sesia, diocese of Novara, had recalled him from far off countries.* Possibly, also, he was advised to come back to witness the accomplishment of his own predictions: though this hypothesis is weakened by the fact that the death of Boniface VIII. in the previous year must have shaken his reliance on his fore-knowledge of future events; and also by the consideration that if his hopes rested on Frederic of Sicily, his natural course would have been to repair, not to Lombardy, but either to the island-realm of that king himself, as so many of the Fraticelli did before and afterwards, or to the coast of Romagna, and the Apennine of Umbria or Abruzzo, which would have brought him so much nearer Rome, nearer, that is, to the theatre of Frederic's anticipated exploits.

Whatever his real reasons nevertheless Dolcino

* Historia Dulcini, p. 430.

chose to turn his steps towards the place of his nativity, and was first heard of in the valley of the Sesia.

§ 5. The valley of the Sesia is divided into two distinct regions. The river has its head in the deepest gorges of Monte Rosa, comes down into the plains between Gattinara and Romagnano, and enters the Po below Vercelli. The upper part, as far as Ponte San Quirico, between Bettola and Serravalle, bearing more properly the name of Val Sesia, and called also the territory of Varallo, belongs to the diocese of Novara. The lower valley flows from Ponte San Quirico down to the lower hills, between Gattinara on the right and Romagnano on the left bank. All along this lower course, the river itself forms the boundary line between the diocese of Novara and that of Vercelli; but the upper regions of the latter bishopric, on the north-west, constituting the territory of Biella, were detached from Vercelli, and erected into a new diocese (of Biella) in 1772. In its upper course the river flows between two immense mountain ridges which slope down, converging majestically upon Borgo Sesia and Serravalle, and there leaving but a narrow outlet for the stream, enclose on all sides that sequestered region to which the name of Val Sesia more properly belongs.

The southern of those two mountain ridges, the very limit which parted once the Novarese from the Vercellese, now Biellese, territory, and to which modern maps give the name of Mount Molera, looks down upon another valley, and gives rise to another river, the Sessera, a confluent of the Sesia, which, after running almost parallel to the main stream, joins it at Bornate, near Serravalle, and just above Ponte San Quirico, the bourne of Val Sesia.

The whole valley of the Sesia, and especially the upper district, is at the present day one of the happiest and loveliest regions bordering on the great alpine crest; with wide-spreading chesnut and walnut woods everywhere mantling the mountain sides; the vivid green of rich pastures running unbroken up to the limit of perpetual snows. The Val Sesia numbers, besides two large boroughs, no less than thirty thriving villages. It yields mineral produce, especially iron and copper. The beauty of landscape, freshness of the air, and wonderful purity of the waters, together with the renowned sanctuary of the Sacro Monte, or New Jerusalem, at Varallo, founded in 1486, attract crowds of foreign visitors in the summer season. Some of the people in the higher regions, at Alagna, Rima, Rimella, &c., are the descendants of German settlers, and speak a Teutonic dialect. The main valley of the Sesia

bears also the name of Val Grande, to distinguish it from the minor vales of the Sermenta and Mastallone, and other tributaries of the principal stream.

The valley of the Sessera — deep, narrow, solitary — presents also a smiling and fertile aspect, from Bornate and Crevacore, as far as Trivero and Coggiola. Above, it is made up of pasture-lands or "Alps," only inhabited by cow and sheep herds, in the summer months. Like the Valsesians, the Biellese are an industrious, clean, thrifty race. Besides considerable skill in home manufacture, they migrate and trade abroad, and the wealth they thus accumulate is spent in embellishing their dwellings and churches. They are all artists by nature, and the whole region has an air of well-being, ease, and populousness which resembles Switzerland rather than Italy.

In the times of our heresiarch, that part of the country, if not so well cultivated, was at any rate thickly inhabited. The malcontents from the Lombard cities, particularly many of the defeated nobles, had everywhere taken to the hills, either, in many instances, repairing to the homes of their feudal ancestry, or else seeking shelter wherever nature offered a ready stronghold. Several branches of the Tornielli and Visconti, the Testa, Ranza, Ravella, Rasaria, Scarognini, Rusca, Chiarini, &c. were num-

bered amongst them.* These men, with very few exceptions, the outcasts of rampant democracy, could bear no good will to Dolcino and his communistic ideas. The favour which the Apostles almost instinctively found with the rustics of those valleys, and even with their unsophisticated clergy, was more than counterbalanced by the animosity of the bankrupt aristocracy on the mountain steeps. It was on their part that the most serious hostilities might be apprehended. Yet there were exceptions, nevertheless. The powerful house of the Biandrate, and some of their Ghibeline adherents, such as the Tizzoni, and other nobles who had been driven from Vercelli at the time of the success of the Guelph or Avogadro party, in 1301, showed a more or less open inclination to Dolcino and his party, and the heresiarch is even said to have found a temporary refuge in some of their castles. We learn also, from the very best authority †, that it was owing to the Biandrate, and the Ghibelines in general, that these mountainous regions had at all times been infested by heretics of every description. The town of Serravalle was even built, in 1254, and fortified by the Vercellese with a view to put a check to their incursions.

* Lana, Guida nella Valsesia, Novara, 1840, p. 18, 19.

† Durandi, Dell' Antica Condizione del Vercellese, &c. Turin, 1776, p. 112.

§ 6. Dolcino came suddenly from a distant part of the world, and first tarried in the neighbourhood of Gattinara and Serravalle, in the year 1304. Those towns lie both on the right bank of the Sesia, within the diocese of Vercelli: the former nearly opposite to Romagnano; the latter only a few miles below Borgo Sesia; and, as the very name implies, near the point where the valley contracts itself, marking the limit between the higher and lower lands. At Serravalle, Dolcino was so successful as to bring the very rector, or parish priest, together with many of the flock, to his own views. But the Inquisitors from Vercelli had already their eyes upon him. It was only through a timely warning, and by a hair-breadth escape, that he slipped through their fingers. It would seem that he tarried for some time in the castle of Robiallo, one of the strongholds of the Biandrate family, situated at a short distance below the hamlet of Bettola, not far from Ponte San Quirico, on the left bank of the river, and, consequently, in the diocese of Novara*: the ruins of the castle are still perceptible. But there also he deemed his position untenable; so that, ascending the river, he betook himself to the territory of Varallo, always in the

* Lana, Valsesia, p. 51. Rimella, Sacra Lega de' Valsesiani contro l' Eretico Dulcino, &c. Vercelli, 1793, p. 81.

diocese of Novara, with as many of his disciples as deemed it expedient to follow.

Those that lagged behind fared badly. The Inquisitors, backed by the "secular arm" of the podestà or supreme magistrate of Vercelli, seized hold of the parish priest, and as many of the townspeople as were suspected of listening to the teachings of Dolcino or favouring his flight, and after long examination they uttered a sentence against them, the tenor of which is not known to us, but which could be nothing less than imprisonment and confiscation.*

A fugitive from Serravalle and Robiallo, Dolcino had a ready shelter in the house of that Milano, or Emiliano Sola†, whose invitations had prevailed upon him to come over from distant lands. His host was a wealthy countryman, an inhabitant of Campertollio, now Campertogno, in that upper part of the Valsesia which goes more especially by the name of Val Grande.

Dolcino and his faith throve for a time under this friendly roof; but always uneasy on the score of his enemies‡, and warned by the fate of his friends at

* See Appendix E. The Rector of Serravalle.

† Appendix F. Milano Sola.

‡ Benvenuto da Imola sets the question of the necessity by which Dolcino was driven to hostility, completely at rest. He

Serravalle, he came to the resolution to establish himself beyond all limit of human habitations. Milano Sola, with many of the wealthy countrymen of the neighbourhood, and all his other followers, went with him. They took all of their property that could be removed, and that could prove of use to them: they ascended a great mountain; there built huts and fortified themselves, especially against the rigour of the climate: against other enemies the very site of their camp sufficiently protected them. The mountain is, by the anonymous historian, described as rising behind Balmara. There is, however, no place bearing that name in Valsesia, and the author could hardly designate by that name the town of Balmuccia, lying at a great distance down the valley, between Scopa and Varallo. There is no doubt in our mind, but the first mountain refuge of Dolcino was in the ridge called "le Alpi del Vallone di Valnera," — the confusion of Valnera with Balmara is sufficiently easy, — a verdant ridge rising immediately to the west of Campertogno, and which may now be reached by about two hours' hard walk from the said town.

Dolcino was now in the county or diocese of Novara, and, consequently, beyond reach of the jurisdiction of

says: "Sentiens bellum parari contra se munivit montem," &c. p. 1121.

Vercelli. But the Inquisitors and magistrates of the latter diocese, after driving him off their own ground, were still anxious to pursue him further, and sought the means of carrying the war over their neighbour's boundaries.

§ 7. The Bishop of Novara, from 1304 to 1309, was Uguccione de' Borromei.* It was his immediate concern to clear his diocese of these dangerous intruders. But he had, especially now, at his accession, his hands full of other business. He was a party man, and had to hold his ground against the Ghibelines, who attacked him, especially in Val d' Ossola, from the Valais, where some branches of the Biandrate had established themselves. He of Vercelli, on the contrary, had both more zeal and more leisure to hunt after heretics. He was called Rainieri di Pezzana, and belonged to the Avogadro family, then omnipotent in Vercelli. He had risen, we are told by his panegyrists †, in the Church step by step, with a nolo-episcopari simper on his lips all the time, and had attained the highest dignity in the diocese by unanimous popular acclamation, bearing down the opposition of Boniface VIII., who had at last been compelled to sanction his election in 1303.

The real facts of the matter are, however, simply

* Ughelli, Italia Sacr. tom. iv. p. 731. Litta, Famiglie Celebri di Italia, art. Borromeo di San Miniato.

† Hist. Dulcin. p. 429.

these * :—Vercelli had shaken off the feudal, together with the imperial yoke at the time of the Lombard League, in which it had played an important part. It had resisted the pretensions of the powerful Ghibeline family of Biandrate, who from their castle, between Vercelli and Novara, attempted to establish their dominion, not only over both those cities, but over also a great part of Piedmont. The pride of this family had been humbled in 1170, and Vercelli had equally come off victorious in its differences with the lords of Montferrat, in 1182. The town, however, only freed itself from lordly power to fall under episcopal ascendency. Even of this it wearied, at last, in the early part of the thirteenth century; it repeatedly drove the bishops from its walls, and, in 1243, it reconstituted itself as a democratic state, and reasserted its rights over its rural districts, as far as the Alps. It was, however, soon distracted by the factions of its noble families, and was alternately under the sway either of the Tizzoni, or Tiziani, who generally headed the Ghibeline party; and of the Avogadro and Arboreo, who led the Guelph. The latter, from their very attachment to Church interests, had a strong voice in all episcopal elections,

* Ughelli, Ital. Sacr. tom. iv. p. 798. Cibrario, Vercelli, Il Vercellese, e l' Ossola, in Storia del Conte Rosso, Turin, 1851. cap. iii. p. 167.

and the Avogadro all but monopolised the See since 1243. When the opposite faction was in the ascendant they, and their bishops with them, had to give way, and removed the See itself to Biella, in the mountain districts, where they at all times mustered very strong. They had, however, obtained a complete success in 1301, they had driven the Tizzoni, and all the Ghibelines from Vercelli, and since that year they had lorded it over both town and country. The unanimity of the election of Rainieri, in 1303, is, therefore, easily accounted for. They had already proposed him as a candidate, in 1272, but without success; and they now carried the election with such indecent hurry as to incur the hot displeasure of Boniface VIII., who complained that no proper regard had been paid to the privileges of the Holy See. That difficulty being smoothed down, however, the bishop was put in possession of his full powers. The bishop was no longer the absolute sovereign he had been in previous ages; but he could still give great weight to the party with which he sided; and the Avogadro, backed by the favour of the Church, of which they had always been the champions, and from which they derived their name of Avogadri, Advocati, or Advocatores—the advocates of the diocese, rid of the presence of their adversaries, were now at the very height of their prosperity. The family was split

into various branches, amongst whom were the Lords of Pezzana, of Guaregna, of Casanova, of Colobiano, &c., most of which are extant, and highly flourishing at the present day. One of the latter, Simone da Colobiano, was amongst the best generals of his time; another of this family, Francesco Avogadro da Colobiano, had also contributed to the success of the Della Torre, at Milan, who, like other Guelphs over all Lombardy, obtained about this period a temporary advantage over their implacable enemies, the Ghibeline Visconti.

Bishop Rainieri was new in office, eager in the discharge of his duties. He took as his model Eusebius, the founder and patron of his see, in the fourth century, who had been a terror to the Arians, during a glorious career, which won him the crown of martyrdom, and secured for him the honour of canonization (A. D. 371). All the efforts of that distinguished saint had not, however, driven all Arianism and other abominable heresy from the lands subjected to his see. We read, in the memorials of the dark ages *, that in 901, at the time of the most terrific inroads of the Hungarians, the Arians and other sectarians, always at war with the clergy, took advantage of the universal calamity of their country, and joining the barbarian hordes, they aided them so efficiently

* Irici, Joan. And. Tridinensis, Rerum Patriæ, lib. iii. Milan, 1745, p. 12—16.

against their spiritual lords, that hardly one priest was suffered to live in the whole diocese.

Religious dissent was always a pretext for political insubordination. The Bishop Rainieri and his partisans knew it, and the cause of orthodoxy was taken up by them with a zeal in which a feeling of self-preservation had no trifling share.

For these and other reasons, which we soon shall see, this merely religious question was mixed up with political matters, and all the family of the bishop, with their vast connections all over the diocese, and all over Lombardy, took the field with their kinsman, and headed his forces. Some of the Avogadro of Guaregna and Casanova were, in fact, the generals of the expedition.

In his officious pursuits after heretics the good bishop had, however, some difficulties to contend with. The Apostles had quitted his diocese, and he had no right to overstep its limit. There was for nearly a year, 1304—1305, no pope over Christendom, and the Church had been thrown into the greatest disorder. But when at last Clement V. was elected the bishop lay the grave matter before him, and was invested with full powers to follow his game into his neighbour's preserves.

Measures were taken, and it was, perhaps, a mere show, to win back the stray sheep, by means of

conciliation. Pope Clement sent a few of the Dominicans to Dolcino's camp, to see what the might of their eloquence could effect.* They were, however, sent back with contempt, and on their return the Papal bulls were promulgated, and war was declared. The Pope granted to any man who would take arms against Dolcino for one month the same indulgences awarded to the warriors of the Cross in Palestine.

§ 8. The Papal bull was issued soon after the exaltation of the new Pope, which took place on the 5th of June, 1305. Before the 24th of August, a considerable force had assembled at Scopa, composed chiefly of the lords and knights of the neighbourhood; and on that day, in the main church of that town, the leaders took a solemn oath never to lay down their arms till their purpose was thoroughly made good.

The form of that sacred pledge, as preserved in the acts of the public notary, is given by Muratori, and it is a curious, interesting document.†

" After it has pleased God," it says, " to deliver almost the whole of the Lower Valley of the Sesia

* Ptolomæi Lucensis, Histor. Ecclesiast. Mur. Rer. Ital. tom. xi. p. 1228. See Appendix G. Missionaries to Dolcino.

† Muratori in Hist. Dulcin. p. 429, note 10. See also Rimella, La Sacra Lega de' Valsesiani, who gives the names of the chief personages who signed the deed, from a copy in his possession. According to him, there are three copies extant, p. 50.

from the tyranny of the Biandrate" (that famous Ghibeline family which, as we have seen, had been the terror both of Vercelli and Novara, and of other parts of Piedmont, and which, although now driven from the plain, still held its ground, and from parts of the Valais and of the Val d' Ossola caused great uneasiness to those districts), "the villainous heretics, the Gazari, their partisans (*eorum milites*, an expression conveying a clear idea that these heretics were looked upon as enemies of the Guelph party, as well as of the Church, and which accounts for the zeal of the Avogadro family and of all their dependents of Vercelli for their extermination), "invaded the Upper Valley or Val Grande, fortified themselves in Val Raxa, and desolated the country with pillage, slaughter, and arson, with all sacrilegious enormities. It pleased our Holy Father Clement, at his accession, to publish an indulgence in the form of a crusade, against Dolcino and his followers. Wherefore, the vassals, the people, and the members of those illustrious families which, in consequence of the calamities of wars and factions, have sought a refuge on these Alps, assembling here in a general council, have contracted a perpetual covenant among them, and have resolved and decreed, with one mind and one will, to pursue these ravagers by might of arms to the last drop of their blood; and from this day to begin the

war and the leaguer. Thus, they swore on God's gospels, in all unity, truth, and fidelity, declaring war to these perverse enemies of the faith and freedom, even to their utter extermination."

On hearing of these formidable preparations, Fra Dolcino lost no time in breaking up his camp, and that, most probably, even previous to the meeting of the crusaders at Scopa. He disappeared, secretly, by night, from his position of Valnera, and removed to another more lonely, more rugged mountain, which the records of the times call the "Mons," or "Saxum Parietis Calvæ" (the Mountain or Rock of the Bare Wall), a name sufficiently indicative of its steep and forbidding appearance. On this new spot those ancient Mormons again constructed their dwellings and fortifications. They were, perhaps, stronger than at any other period; and the historian who furnishes the minutest particulars*, reckons their number at "more than fourteen hundred." It must have been considerably "more," as we shall see; and from other authorities it would seem, that their ranks

* Hist. Dulc. p. 431 Pegna in Eymeric. Direct. Inquisit. p. 272. Villani, Giov. Histor. Fiorent. p. 383. Tritheim, Annal. Hirsaugens. tom. ii. p. 104. Antoninus, Episcop. Florentin. Histor. Lugduni, 1517, tom. iii. fol. xc. a. &c. "Habuit ultra tria millia hominum robustæ juventutis; inter quos erant aliqui nobiles et divites." — Benven. Imolens. p. 1121.

swelled to at least three thousand combatants, perhaps to six thousand persons altogether.

The locality of the Bare Wall is also easily ascertained. It still bears the name of Parete Calva (*Parei Calva*) among the villagers of Campertogno, who behold its summit to the south of their town, and can reach it by about three hours' walk. On the side looking towards Campertogno and upon the Val Grande, the mountain is densely wooded up to the summit; but on the southern side, where it descends into the Val Rassa, it is a bare, steep, perpendicular precipice, and well answers the idea suggested by its name. From the Valnera to the Bare Wall, Dolcino must have crossed, under the greatest difficulties, along the mountain crest. There is still a spot where a stream dashes headlong into a narrow ravine, which the inhabitants designate under the name of *Varca Monga*, or Varco della Monaca (the Pass of the Nun), stating that over that terrible chasm, Margaret, whom they designated as the nun, by a superhuman effort, was made to leap, resting on the strong arm of Dolcino.

On the summit of that dreary Bare Wall, the Apostles are said to have dwelt for above a year. They were at last driven from it by famine, and crossing the huge mountain ridge which separates the territory of Novara from that of Vercelli, they

entered the latter diocese, on the 10th of March, 1306.

There is some confusion and evident contradiction in the few dates dropping thus carelessly from the pen of our anonymous chronicler; which render it an impossibility to satisfy ourselves on some matters of the greatest moment. Dolcino, in all probability, came back to Italy in 1304; he was for a few months at Gattinara, Serravalle, and Robiallo, then a guest of Milano Sola at Campertogno, then for a few months on the hills of Valnera, finally for above a twelvemonth on the Rock of the Bare Wall. If this last statement could be relied upon, he would then have taken this last station on or before the 10th of March, 1305; consequently, before the crusaders met at Scopa (Aug. 24th), or even before the crusade was preached by Clement V., who was only elected on the 5th of June of that year.

That the removal of Dolcino from his post to his second camp was previous to the taking of the oath by the Catholic host at Scopa, seems very clearly to result from the words of the oath itself; in which it is stated that the heretics "had invaded the Val Grande, and fortified themselves in Val Raxa;" as by Val Raxa or Rassa, they evidently meant his position on the Parete Calva, which in fact rises giant-like on the northern side of the said Val Rassa, and alone sepa-

rates that narrow glen from the main valley of the Sesia, to which they give the name of Val Grande.

But if Dolcino was already safely established on this rock before his enemies had obtained a Papal sanction to proceed against him, we must needs take it for granted that his enemies, both from the Valsesia itself, and from other parts of the districts of Novara and Vercelli, had already taken up arms on their own responsibility, and before any aid could be obtained from the Pope.

At the time in which these various enemies meditated a first attack on the hills of Valnera, the heretics, we are told, vanished in the dark, so that in the morning their enemies, on coming up to the mountain, found the camp deserted, and came too hastily to the conclusion that the mere terror of their arms had already broken up and dispersed the heretics, and that the war was therefore at an end. The heretics, however, had gone no great way. They had only given up a strong position for a stronger one. In this last, it may be presumed, they lay for some time snug and still, and their enemies were thrown off their scent. What the Catholics accomplished from the 24th of August to the setting in of the winter is not sufficiently clear; but as it was a host assembled upon feudal principles, made up of volunteers serving for a stipulated period, generally

two months, it is to be presumed, that in spite of their oath never to lay down their arms to the end of their enterprise, they, at least the auxiliaries who may be supposed to have come from distant countries, such as the Vercellese and Novarese, on the first approach of winter fell asunder, and went back every man to his own house, leaving the Valsesians alone to take care of their own territory. The reader must bear in mind that the Valsesia, although belonging to the diocese of Novara, was, however, to a great extent, politically an independent district, burdened therefore with many of the duties, as it was invested with the privileges, of self-existence; principal among which duties was that in ordinary circumstances of providing for its own defence.

On summing up evidence, indeed, it seems very clear that both the authorities of Novara and Vercelli were satisfied with removing the heretics from their immediate territories, and that for a whole year (1305—1306) Dolcino had no other enemy to encounter than the people themselves of Valsesia, aided at the utmost by a few volunteers, both from the adjoining dioceses and from other parts of the country; and that the bishops and their partisans either deemed it unnecessary or had as yet no leisure to proceed any further against him. Certainly the

crusaders who signed their names to the oath at Scopa, on the 24th of August, 1305, were all Valsesians.*

§ 9. The consequence of this isolation was to throw the district of Varallo into consternation. The Podestà, or mayor of Varallo, was a gentleman of the house of Brussato, a house at that time exercising an almost sovereign sway over the whole county of Novara. This man, left alone in the lurch, and hopeless of any succour from other allies, took the field with the gentry and people of his own province, with a view to keep the heretics in check, and put an end to the depredations to which hunger began to drive them. He was, however, signally unsuccessful. He fell into an ambush which Dolcino had laid out for him, and was taken prisoner with a considerable part of his forces. After this defeat the Val Sesia offered no further resistance, and the Apostles overran it as conquerors during the whole of that winter.†

§ 10. To what extent they abused their victory is the point that would be important to clear up.

The Apostles were no saints. They had already so far departed from the rule of their founder, as to take up arms in self-defence. From the principle of

* See Rimella, Sacra Lega de' Valsesiani, p.50. seq.

† See the Appendix H., the Fate of Marco Miretti.

self-defence the right of reprisals too easily springs. The crusaders at Scopa declared that the motive of their enterprise was the protection of the country from the ravages of the Gazari. That declaration, however, was made on the 24th of August, in all probability, when the Apostles had already been driven from their first refuge of the Valnera to the more bleak and inhospitable of the Bare Wall. It seems very clear, that, in spite of all previous persecution, the Apostles would have shunned all encounters. They had withdrawn beyond the limits of human abodes: they had, in defiance of Sagarelli's improvident precepts, taken with them on their first retreat provisions and other means to face the first wants, with a view to avoid all necessity of providing by violence to their subsistence.

Had they been left unmolested, and had not all the prestige of papal decrees, and a war of the cross been resorted to, to fanaticise against them a simple population which were inclined in their favour, they would, doubtless, have been supported by the voluntary alms of their believers, even if the means of the wealthier members of their fraternity were soon exhausted.

But every peaceful means of support was denied them. From that first and comparatively comfortable abode of their own choice they were driven by main

force, compelled to leave it hurriedly, to leave it by stealth, and, there is no doubt, to leave behind them those provisions on which they had reckoned for their subsistence. The inevitable result of such a step was sheer starvation staring them in the face on their first arrival on the rock of the Bare Wall. As soon as the retreat of the main force of their enemy allowed them leisure to breathe, they, of course, issued forth from their hiding-place, came up to the huts of the rustics, and, according to their wont, begged for their bread. But the exhortations of the papal agents, their invectives and slanders, had by this time changed the disposition of the rustics. The famished brethren met with repulse, perhaps with indignity. Hunger and necessity ill brook harsh treatment: the Apostles found it indispensable to help themselves to what no man would help them to. The forcible seizure of necessary food was characterised as robbery, and the blood spilt in the consequent frays was laid to their charge as murder.

Arson is, however, numbered among the crimes which signalised their progress through the valley, together with manslaughter and pillage; and this would scarcely ever be warranted by distress of food or any other legitimate reason of self-preservation. But we are at the same time informed, that they were particularly hostile to the churches; from which

we argue that all wanton destruction by fire was with them merely prompted by iconoclastic notions. It was the ill-will against the clergy which vented itself against the vain idols held out by them to the veneration of a deluded populace.

In their rapid excursions, and we shall see their doings more circumstantially described in their attack on Trivero, in the diocese of Vercelli, they would fall on a defenceless village, seize on everything that could either satisfy their wants on the spot, or that could easily be conveyed to their camp; and on their retreat they would heap together crosses, relics, and other ecclesiastical gear, they would make a bonfire of it all, and if the flames extended to the sacred building itself, they consoled themselves with their favourite maxim, "that a horse-stable or a pig-stye would answer all purposes of Christian worship fully as well as the church itself."

The history of Dolcino says plainly*, that the deeds of violence on their part began after they had shut themselves up in their camp on the Bare Wall; that means, as soon as want was severely felt. That a movement originating in mere distress should end in needless violence, is but too sadly in the course of human nature; and we will not affirm that the

* Historia Dulcin. p. 431.

Apostles never took more than their necessities required, or that they never struck except on actual provocation.

The same stern need which made them lay a violent hand upon property, made them also eager to possess themselves of persons. They took prisoners to live upon their ransom. It is a course followed by Italian bandits both of ancient and modern times. It is always a dangerous, often an inhuman expedient. For, in order to compel the prisoner's friends to pay a heavy sum for his deliverance, it is necessary to act upon their terrors; to have recourse to threats which would soon fall unheeded unless occasionally carried into execution.

The first captives upon which Dolcino made this formidable experiment had, probably, been taken in fair war; they were that Brussato, mayor of Varallo, and the other men of the valley who had taken up arms against him, and fell into his power by a strategic manœuvre. That there is everywhere great anxiety to aggravate the guilt of these Apostles, is very evident from the fact that Cusanus, the biographer of the bishops of Vercelli, does not hesitate to assert* that the mayor and his fellow-captives were slain in cold blood; whereas the ano-

* M. Aur. Cusanus de Episcop. Vercellens. Vercelli, 1676, p. 210—224. See Muratori, note xi. to Hist. Dulc. p. 431.

nymous writer of Dolcino's history, together with all other authorities, eager as they also are to darken Dolcino's memory to the best of their abilities, not only never mention this cruel murder, but positively assert that, like other prisoners, these had to save their life by paying a fine amounting to the whole of their own and their friends' property. This ransom was paid in kind,—in corn, cattle, and other means of subsistence.

That, always driven by famine, the Apostles may in later times have laid hands on the inoffensive inhabitants of those valleys,—that they may have held out to them the same alternative as to the enemies taken sword in hand,—that in the well-tried inefficiency of their threats (especially as their adversaries, wishing to starve them out, forbade the redemption of prisoners by all means that either spiritual exhortation or legal enactment could contrive) they should have been forced to the desperate remedy of giving weight to their words by corresponding deeds, and immolated their victims, we are not unwilling to admit; but hunger was with them the most pressing motive. It bade them be cool and deliberate; however maddened by despair, however urged on by provocation, there must always have been method in their retaliation, calculation in their cruelty.

§ 11. Even all these fearful resources were inadequate to their wants. After ransacking the whole province for ten miles all round above Varallo, so that the whole population was driven to wander abroad in utter destitution, the plunderers themselves were so hard up for lack of food, that they laid hold of unclean animals,—rats, horses, and dogs; until at a loss for any other nutriment, they boiled some hay with grease or tallow, "even in the season of Lent," to the great scandal of the orthodox writer of Dolcino's history, who looks upon that as by no means the least of the atrocities he had to record.*

Even all such disgusting messes came to an end, and then the beleaguered Apostles were compelled to abandon a position which they had found impregnable. And then—it was early in March, the very heart of winter on the Alps—then they made their way along the paths of the avalanche, over

* "Fœnum coctum cum sepo comedebant etiam in tempore quadragesimæ."—Hist. Dulcin. p. 431. And elsewhere, "Carnes vero tota quadragesima comedebant," p. 432. And again: "quod licebat sibi comedere carnes in tota quadragesima in diebus Veneris et Sabbati et in vigiliis præceptis ab Ecclesia, et hoc sine peccato quia non habebant alia sufficientia ad edendum," p. 431. The breach of a fast-day is looked upon with by far greater horror amongst the ignorant Italians than amongst Catholics of any other countries.

rocks and precipices where no man had ever dreamt of forcing a passage*; through deep snows, against obstacles from which the very imagination of the narrator recoils, they left behind them the redoubtable ridge which separates the two dioceses, the valley of the Sesia from that of the Sessera, and came upon Trivero, the first town in the Vercellese territory, in such a state of destitution that they had only a few scraps of meat to answer the cravings of a whole multitude.

So little had, then, their rapacity been sufficient to satisfy their want, that, after the depopulation of the district, they were compelled to quit it; and this, after many of their own number had fallen victims, either to hunger, or to diseases contracted from the unwholesome food to which hunger compelled them, a fact which will dispose us to hear with indulgence of the "enormity of their depredations," since they certainly did not take more than they needed, nor did they suffer less misery than they inflicted.

We must also observe, in further extenuation of their guilt, that, however smiling their pastures, however luxuriant their woods, those alpine regions are always poor, unfit for any produce save the rear-

* "Transeuntes montes magnos, vias inexcogitabiles fecerunt, per nives altissimas, et loca difficillima."—Hist. Dulcin. p. 431.

ing of cattle, and dependent on their neighbours for a supply of corn. Any interruption of free intercourse with more fertile districts, the removal of the cattle and other such measures resorted to in time of war, cannot fail to strike them with immediate penury. The defeated or disbanded host of the crusaders, upon their falling back on their winter-quarters at Varallo, had, undoubtedly, taken up their position in some strong place in the valley, where the inhabitants of the exposed upper district had followed them with all their portable wealth. The terror of the arms of the heretics, enhanced by superstition, and by the exaggerated reports of their Catholic enemies, did more towards starving out and scattering abroad the few remaining rustics than any actual violence they might have to endure. Panic and improvidence aggravated the real miseries of waste and destruction. In ancient no less than in modern times, the Lombard hind always flies before he is attacked; and the sufferings arising from needless alarm are too often more deplorable than the real evils inseparable from the treading of armies.

From the valley of the Sesia to that of the Sessera, there is, even at the present day, no other communication than the most steep and arduous shepherd's paths. The most frequented of them is known by

the name of the Bocchetta or Pass of the Boscarola, and it leads from Trivero to Scopello in about eight hours' walk. There are other such passes, much more long and difficult, further up, one especially called Il Col della Creusa, from Rassa leading into the Val d' Andorno, and hence to Biella. But all these passes are even now considered quite impassable for six months in the year, except by the most venturous smuggler, occasionally, in days of very hard frost. This we say, even at the present day, when human ingenuity and enterprise has done so much towards subduing the Alps, and overcoming the awe with which more helpless generations beheld them. At the times of Fra Dolcino, a journey across those snows was, in all probability, an unheard of achievement; and yet despair nerved to it not merely a few daring mountaineers, but a whole band of armed men, who were either accompanied at the time, or soon afterwards joined by the women in their suite.

§ 12. On the 10th of March, then, being Maundy Thursday, in 1306, Fra Dolcino came down upon the diocese of Vercelli, and rested his exhausted forces on a hill called Mount Zebello, looking down upon the town of Trivero. The hill called Mount Zebello or Rubello, and now St. Bernard's, rises on the southern bank of the Sessera, and for a long

tract its great borders fall down perpendicularly upon that very deep, narrow valley. Its height from the bed of the river is nowhere less than two hours' painful ascent. From Trivero itself, a very fair mountain road now leads to the summit, in little more than an hour, or an hour and a half; but Trivero itself is already very high, and it lies in fact on the very side of the mountain to the south-east away from the river, and almost out of the valley. The summit of the mountain, with the white dot of its little chapel or sanctuary, is a conspicuous object from almost every part of the plain. From that elevated position, a vast panorama may be had of all Piedmont; behind it vast rocky mountains rise perpendicularly all round; far to the north, the Alps of the Val d' Ossola are seen like vast snowy glittering waves, low on the horizon from very distance; and westward, the great mass of Monte Rosa, sitting calm, pure, majestic, almost within reach of the beholder's hand.

On this grand eagle's perch, Dolcino first came to a halt. The halt, however, was of no long duration. Of men who had for so many months been reduced to the last extremities, who had left the dead and the dying behind them in their previous camp, who had strewn the trackless path over which they had toiled with the bodies of their companions

dropping from sheer exhaustion, it seemed impossible to expect further exertions. But Dolcino's genius and necessity were inexorable. On the same hill, at the close of the same night, a choice was made of the bravest in that choice band, and, at break of day, a descent made upon the town of Trivero.

§ 13. Trivero is, at the present day, a large scattered township, divided into no less than five parishes, and numbering above 4225 inhabitants. Its wealth, however, is derived from manufactures and other branches of industry, which are probably of no very ancient date. At the time in which Dolcino made his sudden descent upon it, it had, in all likelihood, nothing but its natural produce to rely upon; and this, notwithstanding the freshness and richness of its pastures, and the luxuriancy of its dense walnut groves, could, by no means, afford subsistence for so large a population, or bless them with the affluence they now seem to enjoy. The inhabitants of that town lay warm in their beds; nothing could well be farther from their dreams than an onset of heretics. The suddenness of the attack thus removed any chance of resistance. The Apostles took possession of the church, rifled it of cups, books, and other sacred utensils; then spread about the houses, set fire to some of them, probably to in-

crease the terror of the people, and loaded themselves with everything that could relieve their urgent wants. They forced a few of the villagers along with them, either as prisoners or hostages; and without further violence — for no mention is made of bloodshed — they hurried away to their starving friends on Mount Zebello.

The men of Trivero began at last to look up from their blind astonishment. With the true instinct of a Lombard peasantry, their first steps were to the church-steeple, where they lay hold of the bell-ropes and tolled the alarm. The bold youths of the neighbouring townships, especially those of Mosso, a straggling village, or rather a group of straggling villages, at the present day, dotting two of the adjoining glens, which bear the names of Upper and Lower Valley of Mosso, gathered at the first peal, and dashed gallantly to the help of their neighbours.

Dolcino, however, a strategist of first-rate abilities, as he proved himself throughout, had foreseen that move and provided against it. He had posted his vanguard on the road between Trivero and Mosso, and the young villagers from the latter place fell in with these strangers, who, though only four and thirty in number, were so well placed as to be able to bar their progress. The people from the plundered town, in their turn, came up, and that

mere handful of men found itself encompassed on all sides: they stood their ground like very lions: they allowed themselves to be mown down to a man, glad in the thought that their self-immolation would enable Dolcino to effect his retreat unmolested, and that his arrival with his booty would be the salvation of their camp.*

§ 14. This first incursion of the Apostles threw Vercelli and the whole diocese into speechless consternation. The Bishop, who had hoped to be quit of such dangerous enemies, ever since he had driven Dolcino from Gattinara and Serravalle in 1304, was at first far from estimating to its full extent the magnitude of his danger. He conceived that the heretics could be but few — about 1000 — worn out by famine and disease, shut up by inhospitable mountains, to which it was enough to confine them, to drive them sooner or later to the necessity of a surrender. He gathered a few of his vassals in great haste, sent for auxiliaries from his immediate neighbours, and marched a respectable force upon the threatened district. These troops must have been but slovenly led. They came blundering on, took up a dangerous position at the foot of the hill, and were set upon by Dolcino, who was watching their movements, who cut them to pieces,

* See Appendix I. The thirty Amazons.

and threw them into hopeless confusion. He took thus a number of prisoners, every man of whom was worth at least his weight in corn and meat, and having thus cleared the ground before him, he obtained a fresh supply not only of food, but of arms also and ammunition.

§ 15. For a few weeks there was thus, necessarily, a suspension of hostilities, during which either party strove to better its respective position.

With all their advantage the Apostles were not equal to a distant inroad on the plain. Compelled to cling to their place of refuge on Mount Zebello, they only thought of strengthening it to the best of their abilities. As they had done in the Valnera, and on the Bare Wall, they built up a little town on their new hill. The Mount Zebello or St. Bernard's is now almost entirely bare of trees upwards of Trivero, but the old inhabitants of the district remember the time when it was all wooded, in its sheltered gorges, up to the summit; and its primeval beech and fir trees supplied Dolcino with ample materials for construction. There was no water on the summit, but adown the mountain side, at about a quarter of a mile distance from their camp, an alpine spring gushed out. Dolcino collected this water into a well, built a stone ravelin round it, and made a covered walk all the way from the spring to

the main citadel, and so fortified this gallery, that he could at all times obtain a supply of the pure element in perfect safety, not only from the close attack, but even from the distant shot of the enemy.

The author of Dolcino's history seems to intimate that this covered way was dug in the rock; but those who have visited the spot, and know the hardness of the material he had to work upon, are aware of the impossibility of such an undertaking in so short a time. There are no traces of excavation in any part of the mountain, and the soil is by no means hollow or cavernous. A very narrow grotto, a natural cleft in the mountain side about fifteen yards in length, opens indeed in the hardest rock, at about half a mile from the summit. The peasantry of Trivero call it la Ca' del Diavol (the devil's own home), and the tradition is, that it was the last refuge of Dolcino on the day of his defeat, and that there he was taken prisoner with a few of his stoutest combatants. But that cavern is at a great distance from the spring above-mentioned, and in altogether a different direction; it pierces an isolated rock through and through, and leads no-where, and is, moreover, so low, that a man can hardly stand upright in any part of it, and must crawl in with the greatest difficulty at both entrances.

On the other side, the Bishop's generals had hastily

drawn up their forces at Mosso, at a reasonable distance, and limited themselves, as it had been done in the previous year in the district of Varallo, to a strict blockade of their dreaded foe. The latter was again very shortly brought on the verge of starvation. The invalids, the women, and all whom he had left behind at the time of his tremendous expedition across the snowy mountains, came up now, day by day, as the advancing season rendered those paths somewhat more practicable; many rustics also, at every new success on the part of the Apostles, invariably joined them. The garrison was thus increased rather by mouths than by available hands; and its position, however impregnable, became daily less tenable. Hunger, however, is proverbially a sharpener of wit. On the first day in May, the Apostles, having already held out for about seven weeks, — the anonymous historian says four months, but it is difficult to reckon so long a time from the 10th of March to the first day in May*— Dolcino called all his men under arms, and with a great deal of show and parade marched them out of the citadel, as if yielding to the law of necessity, and going to look for better quarters elsewhere. All this manœuvre had been witnessed by some of his prisoners, who, after the departure of the main force of the

* Hist. Dulcini, p. 433.

heretics, found themselves thus left behind, in the charge of a few of the brethren. These latter entered into conversation with the prisoners, confirmed them in their natural belief that Dolcino had abandoned his position, and offered not only to set them at liberty, but even to deliver up their camp and the hill to the Bishop's generals, on condition that they would obtain an amnesty in their favour. The released captives ran joyously to the Episcopal camp at Mosso, announced the departure of the enemy, and awakened a tumultuous desire for the immediate occupation of the vacated encampment. Led by the rescued prisoners, the whole host hurried up the hill and stood before the redoubted fortalice, which they found not only deserted by the main force of its garrison, but even by those few contrite and submissive brethren who had undertaken to deliver it up.

A suspicion of some ambush naturally shot across their minds. They had come up at nightfall, and did not venture on the immediate occupation of the citadel, but resolved to put it off till the morrow, and in the meanwhile they lay down outside, on the ground. Clouds now gathered over their heads: these were torn asunder by a sudden mountain gust, and a deluge of rain, snow, and hail, such as can only fall on the Alps, poured down upon their devoted

heads. Drenched with wet, numbed with cold, they rose utterly dispirited in the morning. Always under apprehension of an attack from that blank, silent fort, they not only refused to enter it, but a sudden panic seized them, and they broke off in disorderly retreat.

That was the moment Dolcino had been looking for. He had, as every one easily imagines, only gone out at one gate to come in at another. He had just made the tour of the hill, and allowed his guards time to aid his *ruse de guerre* by their suggestions to the too credulous prisoners. Upon the departure of these latter, he had in great silence regained his quarters, and lay hid the whole night. The stratagem succeeded only by half. Had Dolcino been able to decoy his enemies within his own walls, on the eve, in the dark, *pêle-mêle*, the probability is that hardly a man would have escaped. Even as it turned out, the crusaders had no sooner turned their backs, than out rushed the hidden foes, the "accursed dogs," as the historian calls them resentfully at every word*, and "like very demons," they darted on men totally unfit for self-defence, and killing a good number, and taking as many as were

* "Canes pestiferi, canes maledicti, irruerunt more dæmonum," &c. — Hist. Dulcin. p. 433, &c.

worth taking, they pursued them as far as their own station at Mosso.*

§ 16. This new check caused no little uneasiness to the good Bishop, and impressed him with the necessity of greater exertions. He held a council of war with his generals and many of the nobility and gentry in his interest, and it was resolved to send messengers to Clement V., representing the untoward situation they found themselves in, and the great distress of their finances. Pope Clement † answered as popes usually do at similar junctures. He sent neither men nor money, but was lavish of new bulls and fresh indulgences, and did not forget a few curses to be hurled at the head of those misbelievers, who were by this time tolerably well inured to them. A new crusading host was, however, assembled. The indulgence allowed either of personal or vicarious service; and both volunteers and hirelings were only bound to the standards for the period of a month. Together with the Bishop's own men, the warriors of the cross came from the cities of Lombardy and Tuscany, and, as the conflict

* See Appendix M. James de Quaregna.

† "Le cose della guerra andavan zoppe;
I Bolognesi richiedean danari
Al Papa, e il Papa rispondeva coppe,
E mandava indulgenze per gli altari."
TASSONI, *La Secchia Rapita*, canto xii. st. i.

had now lasted above a year, and the report of great deeds had spread abroad, even from Savoy, France, Provence, and especially from the vale of Aosta.*

As in all decisive encounters, the "Sisters" of the Apostles, under the guidance of Margaret, made their appearance in the *mêlée*, dressed in men's garbs, with a view not only to take their share of the toils and perils of their brethren, but also to make a greater show of combatants†; so now the women of the orthodox party, unwilling to be behind hand, took the cross in great numbers, and the relicts of the men who had fallen in previous combats clubbed together and collected a sum sufficient to arm a band of five hundred cross-bowmen, whom they entertained at their own expence during the campaign.‡

By all these means a very considerable force marched under the standard of the cross and the patronage of the martyr saint, Eusebius of Vercelli,

* "Multi cruce signati venerunt non solùm de terris Lombardiæ, quæ olim vocabatur Gallia Cisalpina, sed etiam de Gallia Transalpina, sicut de Vienna, Sabaudia, Provincia et Francia." Benvenuti Imolens. p. 1121. Cibrario, Storia della Monarchia di Savoia, lib. iv. cap. 10. vol. iii. p. 226.

† "Sæpissime mulieres vestimenta et arma virilia deferebant ut per hoc major exercitus ipsorum appareret, hisque potius tuerentur."—Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

‡ "Fœminæ porrexerunt manum huic bello. Nam viduæ fœminæ miserunt D. balistarios." Benven. Imol. p. 1121.

constituting the bishop's own army, who placed it under the command of James and Peter Quaregna, two noblemen of the district of Biella, and of Thomas de Casanova, all of the Avogadro family, —all kinsmen of the Bishop.

By the side of this another troop was put together by the Comune, or municipality of Vercelli, and these marched under the orders of their own mayor or podestà; they dragged along with them two of those huge, clumsy war-engines which did service instead of artillery in the middle ages; bombards, or *petriere*, which threw heavy stones at a great distance, and with terrible execution.

The Mount Zebello is divided into three great summits. The very highest, the one on which St. Bernard's chapel was built, is most probably the spot on which Dolcino's citadel stood. On the left of this, as you look up to the mountain from Trivero, there is another summit, round and much larger, nearly on a level with the main top, at about one mile's distance from it, which the inhabitants call in their dialect Mount Margueus (Mazzaro). On the right, again, but at a far greater distance from the principal summit, and considerably below it, is another bluff, which the people designate by the name of Mount Turlo. Between the main summit and this Mount Turlo, or Tirlo, is a col or mountain pass,

over which the road passes which leads from Trivero down to the Sessera, and hence again over the pass of the Boscarola to Scopello in Val Sesia. This pass is called at its lowest point, nearer Trivero, the Sella Caulera; at its highest, nearer the mountain top, the Sella di Stavello.

§ 17. The two main divisions of the crusaders took up their position on the first arrival. Notwithstanding immense superiority of numbers, they could not be induced to venture into the lion's jaw, by a direct attack on Mount Zebello; but sat themselves down around it, determined to reduce the enemy by a close blockade. The crusaders opened the campaign by the sudden occupation of a mountain rising immediately opposite to the main summit, most probably the Mount Margueus, as no other part comes so near that the stones launched by their machines could fall in the very centre of the heretics' fortified camp with fatal effect on their persons and habitations, as the chronicler describes. The taking of this hill, building of a fine and strong bastion on its summit, and conveying those unwieldy war-engines to their place, took not a little time, and cost infinite labour. It was, however, accomplished, and the Bishop, who, old as he was, deemed it necessary to encourage his own people and to strike dismay amongst the enemies by his venerable presence, and

who with this intent came up all the way from his see, mounted on his white ambling mule, and clad in his pontifical attire, garrisoned this his main stronghold with twelve hundred of his picked men. The mayor's army, for their own part, took up a similar position at the foot of the hill, and equally fortified it. The two camps were thus within reach of each other, ready for mutual support.

Such was the common mode of warfare in the middle ages; they combated one fort by another. Owing to want of unwearied watch, and good steady discipline, the investment of a strong place was made by the erection of one or more entrenched camps; regular fortresses, in fact, so contrived with towers, bastions, and moats as to guard against all chances of a sally from the besieged. Owing to the ready dispersion of a feudal army, nothing was more common than a reverse of fortune, by which the belligerents exchanged parts, and it became the besiegers' turn to be attacked in their own fortifications. Thus at the time of the leaguer of Parma, in 1248, to quote one out of a thousand instances, Frederic II. undertook to reduce that city by the construction of another town, to which he gave the auspicious name of "Victoria," seemingly because his host, imperial host as it was, could not take care of itself in an open field. And when at last the Parmesans mustered up

courage to fall on that ill-guarded camp, and beat up the emperor's quarters, they put an end both to the siege and to the war; and the fall of the stronghold was the signal for the disorganization of its defenders.*

§ 18. To complete the works contemplated by the crusaders, it was necessary for them to take possession of the other hill, called the Mount Turlo, between which and the summit occupied by Dolcino ran, as we have seen, that long sweep of lower ground which bears the name of "Sella di Stavello." This mountain pass had, as its name "saddle" implies, an extensive table-land on the summit, spacious enough to serve for a battle-field. It was pasture-land throughout, garlanded here and there by deep bushes, here and there by clumps of beech-trees, fine trees, such as only grow on the Italian side of the Alps and on the Apennine crest. Had the Bishop's plan entirely succeeded, had he been able to establish his forces on the hill on the right as he had on that on the left and at the base, Fra Dolcino would thus have been cut off on three sides, and had hardly any ground to fall back upon except the precipitate slope which fell into the Sessera, beyond which

* Chronic. Parmens. in Mur. Rer. Ital. Script. tom. ix. p. 770. &c.

there was nothing except the bleak mountain region, —all the desolation of the Alpine desert.

Full of the importance of their enterprise, the crusaders made an onset on the Sella di Stavello, in that heedless, headlong style which characterises the movements of an improvised army. But Dolcino, for whom the occupation of the Sella was matter of life and death, had been on the watch, and was beforehand with his enemy. No sooner had this latter reached the plain on the summit of the pass, than out from a hundred thickets rushed the "pernicious Gazzari." The warriors of the cross were hurled down the mountain-side. Reinforcements stepped up on both sides; a general engagement ensued, with great carnage on both sides. So great was the havoc, indeed, that the mountain-torrent which flows from the Sella di Stavello, and which now bears the name of the Ricco, or Riccio, was dyed deep with gore as far as its confluent with the main stream of the Sessera; and from this circumstance, and from the heap of dead bodies and severed limbs that floated on its surface, it received the name of Carnasco, which it is said to have preserved for some time, but which it has certainly lost at the present day. Among the many who came to their end in that encounter were five noblemen, all from the neighbouring town of Crevacuore, probably brothers

and lords of the place, who with their men fell on the attack of that lower part of the pass, which was then and is still called the Sella Caulera.*

In this combat once more fortune declared in favour of the heretics. Towards evening the crusading forces, in spite of their great superiority of numbers, were beaten at all points, and fell back upon the towns of Trivero, Mosso, and Crevacuore.

§ 19. That engagement took place towards the fall of the year, and throughout the autumn and winter Dolcino followed up his advantage, and every day was signalised by a further extension of his possessions. In December, the municipal forces of Vercelli found themselves unable to hold their position in the valley, and in so great a dread of pursuit, if they left it in sight of the enemy, that they chose the darkest and longest night of the year, and stole out of their camp, without as much as conveying a hint of their intentions to their confederates on the hill, and setting fire to their tents, barracks, and other works, effected their escape. The main episcopal force, reduced from 1200 to only 700 men, was thus left behind on the hill it occupied from the outset, isolated now, encompassed all round by mountains of snow, and sore beset by the enemy, who, masters of all the positions around, cut off all retreat. It would

* Histor. Dulcin. p. 434.

thus have perished with cold and hunger, had not the Bishop, always indefatigable in his exertions, sent a body of daring mountaineers, who by dint of infinite toil cut open a path for them across the deep snow, and thus conveyed these poor men, stiff and helpless, but yet alive, to a place of safety.

This great object being obtained, the crusaders fell back altogether, abandoning not only the positions which they had occupied and attempted to occupy, on six of which now Dolcino in his turn built his own bastions and trenches, but also, successively, the towns of Trivero, Mosso, Coggiola, Flecchia, and as far as Crevacuore on the east, and Mortigliengo and Curino in the south. All these places are extant with hardly any modification in the names.

The demoralisation of the Catholics, both people and military, was so complete, that the mere sight of the heretics was enough to strike a panic amongst them: a whole host often running from a mere handful of the enemy.*

The Bishop, however, compelled as he was to give up his ground, would not abandon his plan—a plan which had been followed now for more than two

* "Et ideo homines diœcesis et civitatis Vercellorum erant ita perterriti et tabefacti, quod a facie ipsorum canum quantum poterant fugiebant; immo sæpissime pauci de ipsis multos de Fidelibus persequebantur."—Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

years, and which aimed at starving his adversaries. He allowed the heretics full run of the country round Trivero, but placed himself on the mountains above the vales of Mosso, and in the territories of Mortigliengo and Bedullio, now Bioglio, and erected new works, behind which his men were at last brought to a stand. By this manœuvre he limited the enemy's excursions to the barren district which he had purchased at so high a rate, and otherwise effectually protected the broad and rich low lands of his diocese. By a policy of which Russian despotism has recently given so luminous an example, he took timely measures for the depopulation aud utter destruction of every place he was compelled to evacuate. He forced the whole of the inhabitants of the occupied districts to emigrate on the enemy's approach; these dragged their cattle and all their portable goods along with them: fire consumed whatever could not follow them.

Dolcino, thus victorious on the summit of Mount Zebello, and on six other mountain-tops equally bristling with his citadels, lorded it over a desert. His present camp was vast, but hopelessly barren and waste. All round, south and east, the Bishop guarded every outlet, and interrupted all communication: on the west were mountains, ridge behind ridge, inhabited by all the terrors of a severe winter, and in-

finitely more formidable at that period than the high spirit and perseverance of modern curiosity has rendered them since. On the north, again, mountains, and beyond them the district of Varallo, such as it had been left after the unsparing devastations of the previous year. Further on again mountains, and on the other side other valleys,— those of Ossola on the north, and of Gressoney and Aosta on the west, where, had there been the slightest possibility of cutting one's way to them, the Apostles would have found the peasantry all in arms, fanaticised by their priests, sworn to their destruction.

§ 20. Fra Dolcino, like a lion in the pit the hunter has dug for him, paced up and down that desolate valley of Trivero. It was at this time that his worst deeds of cruelty and rapacity are said to have taken place*; and truly there was despair enough in his situation to prompt him to the most savage excesses. There is something, nevertheless, in the enumeration of his crimes, as set down by the historian who all but witnessed them, that may sometimes awaken our suspicions as to his veracity and discernment, sometimes calls up our smiles at his simplicity.

The greatest offence of the heretics in his estimation was of course sacrilege. The heretic "dogs"

* Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

desecrated the churches of Mosso and Trivero. They lopped off the arms* of wooden Madonnas, disfigured other images, carried away cups and other silver utensils, and finally pulled down the bells and demolished the belfries.

All this was doubtless wanton work. It was the Vandalism of the Petrobrusians in France†, of the Stedingers in Germany before Dolcino, that of the Independents in England and Covenanters in Scotland after him. The just hatred of reformers for the Catholic priesthood everywhere vented itself upon the tools of their jugglery. The breaking of the bells was especially characteristic. All apostolical fraternities had a grudge against those christened brazen monitors, which they called "the Devil's trumpets," an appellation which any one who has lived in Italian towns, or even in Protestant London, especially in the vicinity of Puseyite chapels, may feel disposed to find correct. The recollection of the straits to which the tolling of the alarm-bell at Trivero had brought Dolcino and his friends on their first attack on that place, was not calculated to stay their destroying hand, on a second visit. At Trivero, we are told again, they removed and shattered the sacred

* Statuæ ligneæ ad honorem Beatæ Mariæ Virginis fabricatæ brachium amputaverunt," &c.—Ibid.

† See *antè*, chap. i. sect. 15—26.

stones of the main altar, hallowed, in all Catholic churches, by the sacrament which rests upon them during the performance of mass and communion. But the same horrid deed could not be perpetrated at Mosso, for, owing to some divine interference which is not explained, the Gazzari were never able to remove the linen cloth that covered them:* — a statement tantamount to a positive avowal that at Mosso, at least, the altars on the return of the faithful were found inviolate.

§ 21. It, however, signifies but little what real harm was done to stone or wooden idols; but the Apostles are also charged with murder, accompanied with every refinement of barbarism. It is distinctly asserted that they hung many of the faithful servants of Christ upon the gallows, amongst others a child about ten years old; that they mutilated other persons; cut off the nose, lips, hands and feet of some women; and that one of these, whose arm was cruelly amputated, suffered such tortures as brought about her premature confinement; and that her infant thus born was left to die on Mount Zebello, almost on the instant of its birth — unbaptized.

* "Tentaverunt lapides de altari majori diruere et mappam quæ co-operiebat ipsum altare exportare voluerunt, et multa alia bona, sed *volente Deo* non potuerunt extrahere de altari." —Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

These are atrocities which no motive or circumstance can extenuate. Yet we must observe, that these executions are said to have taken place, not, as it would be natural to suppose, in the heat of action, or after the storming of towns, but in cold blood, on Mount Zebello, in the presence of the wives, parents, and other relatives of the sufferers, and merely because these were unable or unwilling to rescue their friends at the price the heretics set upon their lives or limbs.* These heretics, it must never be forgotten, were fighting for bread. Their prisoners were their only resource, and the inexorable Bishop, true to his own plan, forbade and actually disabled his subjects from treating for the redemption of captives, or, indeed, from holding any intercourse with their captors. The heretics, always under the maddening scourge of necessity, we think it very natural to suppose, led forth their prisoners on the esplanade before their fort on the hill; they raised their gibbet fully in sight of their besiegers, they first threatened, and then actually suspended their victims, always in the hope that the heart of their friends would relent. There the men hung — one minute — two minutes — five minutes: the murder

* "Item multos alios viros suspenderunt, videntibus uxoribus et parentibus, quia *non volebant* se redimere arbitrio prædictorum canum."—Hist. Dulc. p. 437.

was consummated; and it is a question whether the charge of it should lie heavier on the Apostles who demanded a ransom rather proportionate to their wants than to the means of the interested parties, or rather on these latter, who could balance between life and gold; or, finally, on their mitred ruler, who allowed neither gold, nor what was infinitely more precious than gold, on any account to go beyond his outposts.

Certainly, as far as their own interests were concerned, the worst use to which the Apostles could put a prisoner was to deprive him of life. Whatever may be thought of their vindictiveness, it is difficult to conceive that they would not fain have exchanged the man dangling and still writhing on their gallows against the carcase, we will not say of an ox, but of a horse or dog. Even thirst for blood is seldom proof against hunger for bread. And perhaps those very mutilations which on a first glance might be looked upon as a useless refinement of torture, were only a preliminary experiment, or first appeal to the avarice of their enemies. They wished to show these latter that they were in real earnest, but they put off to the last that decisive stroke which, together with the life of their victim, would also have ended all their chances of a bargain for it.

That such horrid experiments should have been

tried upon persons, whom either tender age or sex ought to have recommended to mercy, does indeed greatly aggravate the evil, without, however, changing its nature. That one of the female sufferers was deprived of the privilege in all ages and countries hallowing approaching maternity, would be utterly unpardonable, if we might not suppose that her situation escaped the observation of her tormentors, But what is given as the climax of horrors, the privation of baptismal rites to her new-born infant, is a fact whose importance must be proportionate to our willingness to admit the Catholic doctrine of limbo. All apostolic sects had peculiar notions about the administration of sacraments; some of them strong objections to the baptism of infants.

All these horrors, however, rest entirely on the testimony of our anonymous historian, and on the opinion that we may form from his absurdly intemperate language, of his disposition and ability to tell the truth. That he was himself, although a contemporary, also an ocular witness of all he describes is nowhere asserted; and if we are to suppose that he relied on other people's reports, it is impossible to decide to what extent party spirit and credulity exaggerated or perverted facts. Those who reached Milan only two or three days after the conflict of March, 1848, must have felt how vain it was to

strive to come to the positive truth respecting the atrocities perpetrated in the suburbs by Radetzky's Croatians; atrocities, however, with which the whole town resounded, of which it was high treason to doubt, and which had, undoubtedly, its ground of reality. Contemporaneous statements are not always our safest guide as we grope amidst the darkness of history: sound and unbiassed criticism must often sift even what is called ocular evidence, and test it by the general laws of probability. Reason knows better than passion sees. There are, at any rate, traditions which charge the Catholics themselves with those very atrocities which our anonymous chronicler ascribes to the heretics, and nearly in the same words.*

§ 22. But if the worst deeds imputed to Dolcino were proved, and if the worst motives could be ascribed to him, still it would be necessary to look upon them with due regard to the melancholy times to which such outrages belong. Such were then in Italy the usages of war: and that Dolcino was pursuing the most righteous and legitimate of wars, that of self-defence, we, for our own part, entertain no doubt. During that same siege of Parma, to which we have already adverted, Frederic II. who was fighting not for life, but in pursuit of ambitious

* See Appendix J.* Heretic and Catholic atrocities.

schemes, who had not, like Dolcino, been goaded by mad persecution, and had suffered no injury that could entitle him to reprisals, deemed himself authorised to try to shake the resolution of the citizens by the daily decapitation of four of his prisoners or hostages, two of the noble and two of the plebeian order; nor did he desist from these barbarous executions, until his Italian auxiliaries, especially the Pavese, to their eternal honour, threatened to leave his camp, unless he abandoned a practice repugnant both to the laws of nations and of humanity.* His grandfather, Barbarossa, suspended the hostages of Crema to the wooden towers with which he attempted to storm that city, that the first shafts from the defenders on the walls should fall on their own brothers.† Cruelties of that nature, whatever may be said of the revengeful passions of southern races, were first exercised in Italy by northern despots: and that great master of cruelty, Ezzelino da Romano, the main support of Frederic II., was a German by descent, one of those foreign settlers, whom contempt for their subjects prevented from ever becoming acclimated to Italy. Two or three centuries of ruthless endless warfare had blunted all feeling throughout the country. Family feuds and civil

* Sismondi, Hist. des Republiques Italiennes, tom. ii. p. 53.
† Ibid. tom. i. p. 310.

broils made cold-blood murder and dastard treachery matters of daily occurrence: still nothing more powerfully tended to ensavage the people's hearts, than the variety and ingenuity of torture with which the ministers of the God of Mercy — the Inquisitors, — had, for the last half century, sought out their victims and disposed of them.

§ 23. But all the crimes and outrages of the heretics, if their object, as we suppose, was only a prolongation of their miserable existence, were of no avail towards averting their fate. Had they been able to wait until the thawing of the Alpine snows enabled them to try their fortune across the great mountain barrier, they might, perhaps, have taken some desperate course, such as freed them from similar horrors on the Bare Wall, in the previous spring. But it was otherwise decreed. They soon came to their old loathsome resources of dogs, horses, and mice. They peeled off the bark, dug up the roots of trees; they gnawed the leather of their buff coats, their belts, the soles of their shoes.*

Cannibalism came at last. Such of the Apostles as only died of their wounds or of cold and famine, supplied a repast for their brethren.† We shall not describe their horrid shambles and hideous cookery.

* Benvenut. Imolens. p. 1122.

† Histor. Dulcin. p. 438.

They had provisions of that nature in sufficient quantity, it is likely, to save them from that last dreadful necessity mariners are often brought to — that of casting lots.

All this for above three months.* Skeleton-like and almost blind, they groped about, like Count Ugolino in the Tower of Famine, about nineteen years before them — they groped among the corpses of their comrades. They had no strength or resolution to dig a grave for them. Such of their remnants as were even in their extremities deemed unmeet for human food, were left to the ravenousness of the wolves and vultures of the Alps.

§ 24. The Bishop at last took them out of trouble. He had during the whole winter strained every nerve to procure both material and spiritual aid. The fugitives of Mosso and Trivero, from very necessity, came to swell his ranks. The non-combatants helped him with their prayers. Those two townships made vows to St. Eusebius and to other saints to observe a solemn day of festival and thanksgiving, in commemoration of their deliverance, if they could obtain it.

* "Et in tanta captivitate fuerunt restricti per tres menses et ultra, obsessi super dicto monte, quod semimortui duraverunt existendo in magna necessitate. Et multi ex eis moriebantur, quorum corpora partim comedebant vivi, et partim projiciebant in locis desertis dicti montis Zebelli, a feris et volucribus comedenda."—Hist. Dulc. p. 439.

The men of Mosso appointed the Thursday; those of Trivero, the Friday in holy week. All these prayers and sacred pledges told amazingly against the heretics, who were dying on their hills and dying by inches. The finger of St. Eusebius was visible in all their disasters. The little cattle the misbelievers had left, eleven oxen and forty-nine sheep, fell suddenly dead in their pens as the sacred pledge escaped from the lips of the faithful; and the wine they kept in five casks was converted into a viscous offensive liquid, or evaporated in noisome smoke. The very days appointed for the contemplated thanksgiving were actually those in which the final boon was vouchsafed.

The Episcopal army, which, agreeably to its feudal organisation, had either gone asunder, or rested in its winter-quarters, was again mustered together and led into the field in early spring. It came up to Trivero at the beginning of holy week. There were daily skirmishes at the foot of the various hills, on which the heretics, though worn to mere shadows, still showed good countenance. Indeed, the approach of their detested foes breathed a new soul into their exhausted frames. They fought like men from whom despair has banished fear; who had no better prospect than a speedy and honourable death, and no wish save that of selling their more than

half-spent breath at the highest rate. They fought in silence, sullenly, doggedly, like wild cats at bay. They came to a final battle on the Saddle or Pass of Stavello, on, that is, or near the identical spot which had witnessed the last success of Dolcino in the foregoing autumn. It was again on a Thursday, on that same day, hallowed as the eve of the last agony of the Saviour of mankind, which fell on that year, 1307, on the 23d of March. Again, the plain was strewn with the dead: again, the Carnasco ran high with the blood of both parties. Again, it carried to the main stream that tribute of carnage which gave it its name. A very great number of the Apostles only yielded victory with their life. More than a 1000, or even 1300, according to the same authority*, were found killed, drowned, or burnt; for the brand of the crusaders was hurled among the palisades and other works of the heretics, and these were consumed to ashes together with their defenders. About 150† fell into the hands of their enemies. Amongst others, Fra Dolcino, Margaret, and that Longino de Cattanei, a man of noble birth, who was the bravest of Dolcino's disciples, and acted

* Hist. Dulc. p. 439—441.

† Ptolemæi Lucens. Vit. Clem. V. in Baluz. Vit. Papar. Avenionens. tom. i. p. 26.

as his lieutenant. These were the men the bishop so "tenderly wished" * to have in his power. The eagerness of his men to comply with his directions, that the lives of these men should be spared for the laudable purpose of "making an example" of them, probably prolonged the conflict of that awful day. Agreeably to tradition, Dolcino and a few of his followers were found crouching in that grotto above described †, where they might hope to escape detection, but where, once found out, they had no room even to raise an arm for their defence. This might explain how they came alive into their enemies' hands.

It was over. The remaining strongholds of the misbelieving dogs, and the main citadel on Mount Zebello itself were stormed one after another, and were utterly destroyed, probably by fire; so that we are told, perhaps with some exaggeration, that all vanished on that same day.

The prisoners, loaded with irons all round their arms, feet, and neck, were, on the Saturday of the same holy week, conveyed to Biella, where the Bishop had taken up his quarters so as to be as near

* "Affectuose desiderabat vivos habere, ut pro meritis eorum præmia digna reciperent."—Hist. Dulc. p. 439.

† See *antè* § xv., and see the Appendix K. The Last Conflict.

as possible to the scene of action; and there they were thrown into the dungeons of the castle.

§ 25. Thus ended the war on the Alps.

A melancholy warning to those who deem those mountains impregnable! A warning to those high-minded but over-sanguine enthusiasts, who view those deep ravines and inaccessible cliffs as so many bulwarks and moats reared and dug up by God himself to make them into a stronghold for a just and weak cause against the overpowering numbers of a tyrannical force!

The Alps are no fortress, but only the wall of a fortress. Like the Apennines in all their length, they constitute, not a mountain region, but only a crest. As a breast-plate for Italy, or for Northern Italy at least, the Alpine chain will be found an invaluable defence whenever the whole country, united, self-dependent, looks out at all those defiles; and the champions on the hills can rely on the inexhaustible resources of the plain in their rear. But that the Alps should give the initiative, that a few, however heroic, bands thrown up into Valsesia, or Valtellina, or into Abruzzo, or Calabria, may support themselves for even a single season, and so harass and perplex the foreign invader as to shut him up in his citadels, and give the nation a chance for a general rise — that is one of the many illusions of "Young Italy,"

which must needs vanish with the coming of her years of discretion.

§ 26. The experiment was made, under the very best circumstances, in recent times. The hour and the man had come together. At a period in which all Italy was in arms, in 1848, when vast numbers of youthful adventurers wandered about, houseless, hopeless, lavish of their life for their country, Garibaldi appeared to lead them. He was the man, long kept in reserve by Young Italy for the great purpose, and had won a fair name in distant countries for his genius in that peculiar mode of warfare that was now in contemplation. The leader could not have been abler nor the men braver. Yet the former looked in vain for a strategic point fit for the display of his talents; the latter found themselves in presence of an enemy they were not prepared to encounter. Garibaldi's campaign on the Alps did not last quite a fortnight.

There are many obvious reasons to account for his failure. The Spanish guerilla bands, whom the Italians would have taken as models, are always recruited among the immediate children of the soil — patient, frugal, unwearied mountaineers, hard as their own rocks. The enemy never knows where to find them. The boor he passes by to-day, a ragged goatherd, or a stupid ploughman, the innkeeper, whose

hospitality he repays with ill-usage, will confront him, all cloaked and plumed, a redoubtable guerillero, on the morrow.

The Italian patriots under Garibaldi were strangers n the land of their fathers. Mere city-men, young students for the most part, they knew nothing of the Alps, except the faint blue outline they could descry from their coffee-house window, in the city of the plain. The Italian is too exclusively the man of the city. From the days of ancient Rome he has estranged himself from nature. All civilisation is with him centered in his artificial habits of town-life. The rural population is a mere blank for what concerns the destinies of the country. Accustomed to all the leisure and luxury of their idle frivolous life, the young patriots had nothing to uphold them but the excitement and devotion of the moment. The country people, amongst whom they moved, evinced neither sympathy nor intelligence; they gazed at them in listless stupor, and the very wonderment of their gaze pointed out their course to their pursuers.

Nowhere could the heroes meet with either support or sustenance on the mountains. Had their campaign lasted a whole fortnight, necessity would have driven them to plunder. The patriot of to-day would have stood forth a bandit and a marauder to-

morrow; when the Alpine rustics, in mere self-defence, would have been roused from their apathy, only to join the Austrian in the hue and cry after their brethren.

The case of Fra Dolcino was far different; hence the importance it may have on present matters. Dolcino led mountaineers into the field. He had come unarmed, almost alone into Val Sesia. His earnest eloquence, his simple truths, won him an army. At its head he repulsed all enemies for two years. Had those valleys offered him an outlet, had he always been able to shift his ground from an exhausted into a fruitful district, as the Spanish guerilla men have it in their power to do, and as he did himself by incredible efforts, in one instance — had he, in short, as Dante warned, provided against the gaunt fiend that was to prey upon his entrails, he might have wearied out his adversaries — and who knows? — even eventually have taken the offensive.

But no! Each of these valleys is a *cul-de-sac*, a trap. The man who abandons the plain before his enemy can find but too ready a refuge amongst them; but on their entrance he may read the infernal inscription —

"Relinquish hope, all ye who enter here."

The Apostles made a long stand, unexampled in the annals of Italian, or indeed of any other, war-

fare, because faith and despair were strong at their heart; but their fate, nevertheless, admonishes us that the hopes of Italy must rest on other resources than those which the mountains afford.

§ 27. As in the days of the Lombard League, the war of emancipation must begin and end in the towns. It is only by such cruel and costly sacrifices as Crema, Tortona, Milan, and others, underwent seven centuries ago, that Italy may once more be redeemed.

Some of the spirit of the olden times has indeed been shown lately, 1848–49, at Milan, Brescia, Bologna, and above all, where it least could have been looked for,—in rotten Rome. It was not along the Alpine defiles, it was behind the walls of that "City of the Priests," that Garibaldi answered the expectations of his admirers.

It is of the greatest importance that all should profit by past experience; that no efforts should be wasted in the pursuit of impracticable schemes, however plausible and romantic they may seem in the abstract.

Italy is not Spain or Tyrol. Let it be understood that the Alps can be no cradle for Italian freedom: they may guarantee the independent existence of the country; but they will lend no very material aid towards its attainment.

CHAPTER V.

1. Rejoicings at Vercelli at Dolcino's Downfall. — State of the Diocese: it turns to the Pope for Indemnities.—2. Joy of Clement V. at the Tidings of the Defeat of his Enemies.—3. Papal Munificence.—4. Papal Resolutions as to the Fate of the Heretics.—Their Trial and Execution.—5. Their Guilt.—Estimate of its Enormity on the part of their Judges.—6. Test of their Firmness. 7. With Margaret.—8. With Dolcino.—9. Nature of Dolcino's Guilt in the opinion of his own Age.—10. His Heresy eminently national.—11. Motives imputed to Dolcino.—Incontinence imputed to him—to his Followers.—12. Dolcino's Ambition.—13. Chances of Dolcino's Success.—14. Religious and Political Resources.—15. Contingencies.—Papacy and Providence—in old and recent Times.—Melancholy Reflections.—16. Relics of Dolcino's Sect—in Italy—in France.—17. Peter of Lugo—his Character.—Importance of his Confessions.—18. The Sect in Germany.—19. The Spirit of the Sect survives its final Extinction.—Dolcino and the Waldenses.—Present Position of the latter Sect in Piedmont—their Influence in Italy.—20. The Ideas of Dolcino perpetuated among the Beghards and Lolhards in Germany, England, and the Low Countries.—21. Heretics and Reformers.—Italian and Transalpine Reformers.—22. Dolcino and Luther.—23. Ancient and modern Communism.—24. The real Truth of Communism.—How Dolcino's Apostles understood it.—25. Dolcino's Memory in ancient and modern Times—amongst Catholics.—26. Amongst Protestants.—27. Terrors of Dolcino's Name in the Land of his Exploits.—28. How finally overcome.

§ 1. THE tidings of Dolcino's downfall caused a shout of triumph to be raised at Vercelli, to which all Italy and all Christendom responded.

The joy of the Vercellese themselves was not, however, altogether free from alloy. The exultation of victory was somewhat damped by the reckoning of

its fearful costs. The Bishop and his party were deeply in debt; the diocese in ruins. What had not been trodden by the iron-heels of contending armies, what had escaped the rapacity of the famishing heretics, was purposely laid waste by their opponents to reduce them by starvation. The whole territory had otherwise been drained to the last able-bodied man, to the last farthing, to the last grain of corn, to supply soldiers, money and provisions for the crusade.

For all this immense outlay of two years' disastrous campaign, the Bishop had gained nothing save the ruins of dismantled fortifications, some thousands of dead bodies strewn on the hills, and a few living ones fast in the dungeons of his castle. These latter he determined to turn to the best account. There can be no doubt but the Bishop and his court, the inquisitors and magistrates of Vercelli, would in ordinary circumstances have deemed themselves competent to decide on the fate of their prisoners. But it was not their interest to dispose of them thus summarily. It entered into the views of their policy to show in this instance the most scrupulous deference towards the Holy See. They wished to make the Pope a sharer of their gain — and of their loss.

A legation was therefore sent to Clement V. in France, avowedly with the object of acquainting his Holiness with the happy issue of the holy war, and

asking the pontiff's pleasure with respect to the punishment of the heretics, but in reality to represent the enormity of the sacrifice that war had occasioned, and to describe the exhaustion and distress into which zeal for the Church's interests had plunged both the pastor of Vercelli and his flock; and try to impetrate such indemnity as Papal liberality might consider adequate to their losses. The choice of the men deputed to this mission was not without design. The Bishop appointed those very relatives of his who had led his episcopal forces during the war — James and Peter de Quaregna, and Thomas de Casanova.* As these men no less than the whole clan of the Avogadro, and their party in general, had done and suffered the most in those laborious expeditions, the Bishop was not unwilling, at the same time that he expected them strenuously to plead his own cause, that they should also have a chance of putting in a a word for themselves. Together with the Bishop's credentials, the messengers were also bearers of a letter from Simone da Colobiano, that famous Guelph chief, as we have seen, who had thrown so much lustre on the common name of their family, and who by signal services to the cause of the Church had won such claims as would give the utmost weight to his recommendation.†

* See appendix M. James de Quaregna.

† See appendix L. Simone da Colobiano.

§ 2. The news thus conveyed threw the Pope into an ecstasy of delight; a delight perfectly unmixed on his own part, since a success which was of such vital interest to the head of the Church had actually cost him nothing but the parchment of his bulls, and the wax taper of his excommunication. The legates fell in with him at Poitiers, on the 15th of April, in the evening; and on that very same evening or the ensuing night, he wrote with his own hand a long letter to his patron and very good master, Philip IV. the Fair of France, bidding him rejoice that "that son of Belial, that incarnate fiend, the arch-heretic, Dolcino, had by God's own interference, after infinite trouble, peril and sacrifice, at last been overcome by the Christian arms." *

§ 3. Having thus given vent to his feelings in this letter, which has been preserved, and which supplies us with most of the above particulars, the Gascon Pope seems soon to have cooled upon the matter. His gratitude, at least, and the generosity with which he requited the "great toils and dangers" of his faithful servants, were by no means commensurate with the admiration testified in that first outburst of enthu-

* "Ille dæmon pestifer, filius Belial, horrendissimus hæresiarcha Dulcinus — miro Dei prodigio, cum magnis stragibus, laboribus et periculis," &c.—Baluzii Vitæ Papar. Avenion. tom. ii. p. 67.

siasm. As to the messengers themselves, and their Guelph friends, it nowhere appears that they ever received any more substantial token of the Papal bounty than the honour of being admitted to pay the usual homage on the Apostolical slipper.* The Bishop, however, had his own reward, but even that came late: it was sordid, unavailing; and the Pope took care that it should cause the least possible outlay to himself. By his letters, dated July 4th, 1307†, Clement provided that the Bishop of Vercelli should be exempted from the tribute that all the Christian dioceses were bound to pay annually to the Pontifical treasury. And for the rest, the Bishop was empowered to levy a tax upon all the churches and convents of his own diocese, and also to present a candidate for any vacant place in the chapters of the cathedrals of Asti, Turin, Ivrea and Novara, besides his own, and besides other collegiate churches in Asti, Novara and Monza. All these honours and emoluments of which the Pope was lavish at other people's expense, were only to continue during the Bishop's own life-time, Clement well knowing all the while that this latter had not many years to reckon upon, as indeed he only lived to 1310, and that the paltry pittance thus accruing to his annual income,

* See Appendix N. Papal Munificence.

† Ughelli, Ital. Sacr. tom. iv. p. 799, &c.

was but a poor compensation for efforts which had brought himself and his family to the brink of ruin.

§ 4. So much for Papal guerdons! The Pontiff, however, had no objection that the Bishop and his party should repay themselves by revelling in the blood of their victims. The legates came back with the announcement that Clement V. had waived all the rights and privileges of the Holy See, and decreed, agreeably to the usage of ancient jurisdiction, that the law should be avenged on the very spot in which it had been trespassed upon. Fra Dolcino and his accomplices were consequently to be judged and to suffer at Vercelli.

The trial was made an affair of the greatest moment. The Bishop held a general council of all the prelates and other magnates of the Church, to which he admitted laymen versed in the laws. These, after long deliberations, came to the unanimous resolution, that "the heretics should be made over to the secular arm."*

The principal persons on whom this sentence fell were Dolcino of Novara and Margaret of Trent, who were to suffer at Vercelli, and Longino de Cattanei, of Bergamo, who was kept for execution at Biella. The day appointed for this last act of the tragedy was the 1st of June of the same year, 1307, that is,

* Hist. Dulcin. p. 440.

two months and eight days after that fatal Maundy Thursday, in which those unfortunate persons came into the power of their adversaries; an interval of time which Dolcino's historian*, with his usual slovenliness, computes at "three months, or thereabouts." Of several other heretics that were doomed to the same punishment, at the same time, neither the names nor the numbers have reached posterity.

Margaret of Trent enjoyed the precedence due to her sex. She was first led out into a spot near Vercelli, bearing the name of "Arena Servi," or more properly "Arena Cervi," in the sands, that is, of the torrent Cervo, which has its confluent with the Sesia at about one mile above the city. A high stake had been erected in a conspicuous part of the place. To this she was fastened, and a pile of wood was reared at her feet. The eyes of the inhabitants of town and country were upon her. On her also were the eyes of Dolcino. She was burnt alive with slow fire.

Next came the turn of Dolcino: he was seated high on a car drawn by oxen, and thus paraded from street to street all over Vercelli. His tormentors were all around him. Beside the car, iron pots were carried, filled with burning charcoals: deep in the charcoals were iron pincers, glowing at white

* Hist. Dulcin. p. 440.

heat.* These pincers were continually applied to the various parts of Dolcino's naked body, all along his progress, till all his flesh was torn piece-meal from his limbs: when every bone was bare and the whole town was perambulated, they drove the still living carcase back to the same arena, and threw it on the burning mass in which Margaret had been consumed.

Whilst this was being done at Vercelli's, Longino was expiating his crimes in the same manner at Biella.†

§ 5. We have thus, in a few cold words, described a mode of punishment, of which our less inhuman age can hardly realise all the horrors.

We cannot, however, refrain from a few obvious remarks. These persons who were treated in so savage a manner were guilty of crimes, that even in the opinion of their bigoted enemies were neither unpardonable nor irretrievable. It was vain, on their part, to assert that Dolcino suffered not only as a heretic, but also as a highway robber, murderer, and incendiary. The alternative that was held out to him and to his accomplices to the last would not

* "Cum tenaculis ferri candentis carnes eorum dilaniabant." —Hist. Dulc. p. 440. "Cum tenaculis ignitis truncantibus carnes, et spoliantibus usque ad ossa, fuit crudeliter laceratus et ductus vicatim per civitatem."—Benven. Imol. p. 1122.

† Appendix O. The execution.

equally have been offered to men fairly convicted of such heinous crimes. He only died as an obdurate misbeliever. A single word of recantation, of penitence, of acknowledgment of what his tormentors called the "true faith," would not only have put out the fire that was to destroy him, but even perhaps broken his chains asunder, and obtained his full pardon. His conversion was of greater moment to his adversaries than even their revenge.

§ 6. We are at least most distinctly told that the heretics could be induced neither by entreaties, nor by promises of reward, nor by any other means, to bow down to our Lord Jesus Christ, or to embrace his true religion.* The anxiety to save their souls was then so great, that had they only taken pity on themselves, all their other alleged crimes would, out of this mere consideration, have been overlooked. All their other crimes, then, we conclude, scarcely amounted to an aggravation of the main offence.

Before they addressed themselves to the more sordid feelings of self-preservation and self-interest, the inquisitors resorted to all the most coercive

* "Et tamen nullus ipsorum, nec etiam dicta Margarita unquam voluerunt conveniri prece, sive pretio, nec alio quovis modo converti ad Dominum Iesum Christum et ad veram fidem Catholicam."—Hist. Dulc. p. 440.

means of persuasion. They set their ablest divines at them.* It is probable that the Bishop himself, who was reckoned a man of great controversial powers, and is repeatedly styled "a good athlete of the Church," argued the point with them, but all in vain; Dolcino was ever louder and louder in his testimony to what he deemed truth; he died with the conviction of the approaching fulfilment of his prophecies; and his example had so powerful an effect on his fellow-sufferers, that not one of them fell from or denied him.

§ 7. With Margaret of Trent other arguments were employed. We are distinctly told by Benvenuto da Imola†, that even in this extremity her beauty and her wealth moved several noble and gentle men to ask her in marriage. Mosheim, indeed‡, questions the accuracy of that report, and asks what beauty could be left to a woman who had

* "Multum et diu persuasus a magnis magistris numquam potuit converti ut revocaret errorem suum."—Benvenut. Imol. p. 1122.

† "Illa vero imbuta doctrina ipsius numquam deseruit mandata illius. Ideo pertinacius eo fuit firma in hoc errore, consideratâ sexûs infirmitate. Nam cum multi nobiles quærerent eam in uxorem, tum propter pulchritudinem illius immensam, tum propter ejus pecuniam magnam, numquam potuit flecti."—Benven. Imolens. p. 1122.

‡ Mosheim, Geschichte des Apostel-ordens, book ii. § xvi.

for the last two years been exposed to a slow death by starvation, amidst all the inclemencies of that cruel climate of the Alps. He also contends that any wealth to which she might lay claim would be forfeited by the very sentence which struck her; but he forgets that, had her suitors prevailed on her to recant, there was an end both of forfeiture and condemnation: and she might, on the other hand, be the heiress of wealthy relations at Trent, whose property would be placed beyond reach of any jurisdiction of Vercelli, whether ecclesiastical or temporal.

An appeal to the tenderness and vanity of the softer sex, with a view to win them by earthly allurements from their devotion to the cause of Heaven, was tried as early as the age of primitive Christianity, when, as we are informed by Gibbon*, "the Roman magistrates endeavoured to seduce those whom they were unable to vanquish;" and when "by their orders the most brutal violence was offered to those whom it had been found impossible to seduce." It was most probably with the Bishop's consent, if not by his direction, that proposals of a tender nature were made to Margaret in the gloom of her dungeon. But she was proof against similar

* Gibbon's Fall of the Roman Empire, chap. xvi.

temptation; and, indeed, on the testimony of the same Benvenuto, we learn that she exhibited greater fortitude than even the very man for whose sake she endured so much.

§ 8. But the depth of Dolcino's fortitude who shall presume to fathom? Wife, sister, or concubine, the woman at any rate whom he loved above all human beings, — the woman who had shared his unheard of toils and perils, who had given and was giving such evidence of more than womanly devotion, was expiring in the flames before him. With his eyes sternly riveted on her eyes, he bade her be firm; he bade her cling to him, cling to his faith, and heed not what the ingenuity of tyranny could inflict. The poor woman was writhing as the flickering flames reached her feet, she was quivering in her death-throes, when his admonitory voice rose calmer and calmer, more and more stern and relentless, always bidding her to be firm.

But too firm, poor thing! With her eyes never shrinking from his steady gaze, with his name on her lips, — the name of her "Dulcissimo Dulcino," as the old pedant finds the courage, with a villainous pun, to express it*, the brave, however erring,

* "Unde pœnâ pari cum Dulcino suo dulcissimo, ferro et igne lacerata, illum sequuta est ad Inferos."—Benven. Imol. p. 1122.

creature, vanished in the flames, — she "preceded her paramour to hell."

What impression could burning coals or white-hot pincers make after that? Indeed, we would almost say, supposing him ever so guilty, what greater torture could await Dolcino in another world? The moral anguish he had just undergone deadened him to all mere physical pain. Dolcino was not a man of flesh and blood. He disappointed his tormentors to the very last. No change was ever perceptible in his countenance, not a groan was wrenched from his breast; "only," we are told, with that singular ingenuousness with which men wrote five hundred years ago, "Only when they tore the nose from his face, he was seen spasmodically to shrug his shoulders; and, in another instance, when, before that gate of Vercelli, which is called the 'Porta Picta,' another more vital part of his body was violently severed by the seething instrument, a faint sigh escaped from his heart, and a slight contraction manifested itself in the muscles about the regions of his nostrils." *

* "Et quod notatum fuit a videntibus et est mirabile dictu inter tot et tam varia tormenta dicitur nunquam mutavisse faciem, nisi semel in amputatione nasi, quia strinxit parum spatulas; et in amputatione v——— m——— juxta Portam civitatis quæ dicitur Picta, ubi traxit maximum suspirium cum contractione narium."—Benvenut. Imolens. p. 1122.

§ 9. But enough of the brutalities of that stupid age. Even in that stupid age, however, the heroism of Dolcino and Margaret elicited the admiration of the besotted bystanders, who, according to the same Benvenuto*, lamented that so much courage and constancy had not been exhibited in a better cause.

In a better cause! That may mean, if we judged of its merits by success. For the rest, Dolciño only succumbed in a strife in which others were sure to bear the palm. Divested of all fables which ignorance, prejudice, or open calumny involved it in, Dolcino's scheme amounted to nothing more than a reformation, not of religion, but of the Church; his aim was merely the destruction of the temporal power of the clergy, and he died for his country no less than for his God. The wealth, arrogance, and corruption of the Papal See appeared to him, as it appeared to Dante, as it appeared to a thousand other patriots before and after him, an eternal hindrance to the union, peace, and welfare of Italy, as it was a perpetual check upon the progress of the human race, and a source of infinite scandal to the piety of earnest believers. The religious and political questions were then, as they are now, indissolubly, eternally blended in Italy. At the head of

* "Poterat martyr dici si pœna faceret martyrium et non voluntas."—Benvenut. Imolens.

the Mendicant sects, supported by all the "Brotherlets" of Italy, by all the Beghards of Germany, and France, and Belgium, Dolcino would have attempted what Arnold of Brescia before, and Cola da Rienzi aimed to achieve after him. All Italian dissent was ever stigmatised as "political heresy," not because there have not at all times been daring inquirers on religious subjects in Italy; but because the multitude, in that country, have the question of discipline too strongly at heart to deem it advisable to interfere with the dogma.

§ 10. To this clear mission of Italian protestantism Dolcino was true throughout. If we bring the light of even the clumsiest criticism to bear on his creed, even such as it has been summed up by the ignorance or malignity of men who never utter his name without an imprecation, we have reason to be astonished at the little we find in it that may be construed into a wilful deviation from the strictest orthodoxy. Luther and Calvin would equally have repudiated him. He was neither a Presbyterian nor an Episcopalian, but an uncompromising, staunch Papist. His was, most eminently, the heresy of those whom we have designated as "literal Christians." He would have the Gospel strictly — perhaps blindly — adhered to. Neither was that, in the abstract, an unpardonable offence in the eyes of the Romanism

in those times — witness St. Francis and his early flock — provided he had limited himself to make Gospel-law binding upon himself and his followers only. But Dolcino must needs enforce it upon the whole Christian community, enforce it especially on those who set up as teachers of the Gospel, on those who laid claim to Apostolical succession. That was the error that damned him.

In our own eyes Dolcino was, perhaps, on some points too much of a Quaker, too much of a Shaker, too much of a Mormon. By relying too much upon, exacting too much from, human perfectibility, all those sects allow too ample a scope for the vagaries of fanaticism, or the juggleries of hypocrisy; but there is no evidence that he ever presumed upon, or abused the powers of human reason. It was, on the contrary, excessive abnegation of reason that made him a rebel, for Rome demands indeed such an abnegation on the part of her votaries, only not with regard to God's word, but her own.

Dolcino spoke Christ's own language; and there is no doubt but that, at Rome or Avignon, at Parma and Vercelli, our Saviour himself would, in those days, have fared little better than Sagarelli and Dolcino. He would have found men who styled themselves his representatives on earth, who would con-

demn him on the strength of his own words, and crucify him in his own name.

§ 11. For the rest we need not give one minute's attention to those who would ascribe to Dolcino motives either of ambition or licentiousness. Had his purpose been merely the gratification of his own passions, had his aim been only the enjoyment of his Margaret's company, we are aware of no law, either civil or canonical, that could oppose his desire, even admitting — what does by no means appear to have been the case, and is, on the contrary, stoutly denied by his enemies* — that he was an ordained priest; nay, even supposing that both himself and his "Sister" were bound by monastic vows; for there was hardly any excess of licentiousness that could not be indulged with impunity in the thirteenth century, provided it was within the pale of the Church, and with some show of submission to its authority. All the efforts of such Popes as Gregory VII. and Innocent III. had been directed to little more than to keep up the bare decencies of the Church: they had battled against what they called the concubinate of the priests rather on political than moral principles, an evil which they only cured by closing an eye to much more grievous abuses.

* See Appendix B. Dolcino's Portraits.

Dolcino, familiar with a connection of that nature in his father's household*, himself the offspring of such a connection, was certainly under no necessity to start a new religion, and produce a new code of morality, in justification of his own misconduct, — always taking for granted that he was really guilty of such a misconduct, and that there had been any hindrance to his uniting with Margaret in lawful wedlock.

But if that is, at the utmost, the only grievous charge urged against Dolcino himself, what are we to think of the assertion that it was the indulgence of all gross sensualities that brought the multitude around him, and contributed to the spread of his sect? The sect of the Apostles, it must be kept in mind, did not originate with Dolcino, nor was it in this respect that he introduced any innovation. Their tenets for what concerned their union with their "Sisters," were laid down by Sagarelli, who had probably no such companion of his own, and to whom no irregularity of conduct was ever imputed.† Neither did Sagarelli invent that connection, but it was part and parcel of that Apostolic system on which all mendicant sects were grounded. Women filled with them the places which Mary and Martha occupied by the side of the earliest heralds of Christianity. That

* See Appendix C. Missionaries to Dolcino.

† Appendix A. Sagarelli's son.

familiarity of intercourse may have led to occasional — to frequent impropriety, who would ever doubt? but that that was the incentive by which multitudes were attracted, is simply absurd. Mere sensual pleasures can hold out no very strong inducements to the lower classes, beset as they are by want and blunted by hard labour. There is no instance in the Pagan world of Epicurism making its way anywhere except amongst the pampered sons of refinement and luxury. The poor may be bribed indeed, but not persuaded into debauchery. The hopes of plunder and the specious ideas of communism may have some weight with those who have been called the "Lack-alls:" but, from 1260 to 1304, the sect of the Apostles grew and throve, not only without trespassing upon or coveting their neighbours' goods, but binding itself to the renunciation of their own.

§ 12. That love of power, the prospect of an autocracy somewhat analogous to that of the Old Man of the Mountain, may have had charms for a lofty and solitary mind like Dolcino's, is indeed more credible. His followers, we are told, bowed to his transcendent genius: they kissed his feet*, and regarded him as the noblest and the holiest of human beings. Similar homages, as we have seen†, were paid to Tanquelin, in Brabant, in the twelfth cen-

* Hist. Dulcin. p. 437. † See *antè*, chap. i. § 20.

tury; and that man and his sect, were their history better known, would be found to bear the strongest analogy to the Italian fraternity. We have seen, in many instances, how that devotion was put to the test, and how ready Dolcino's disciples were to lay down life at his bidding without a murmur. At no period, however, was the arch-heretic's ascendency attended by state or grandeur, at no period did it give any promise of success. It was for several years a pre-eminence of privation and misery— at the close, merely a precedence in martyrdom. Mere worldly ambition is apt to weary of disappointment and reverse. Could the mere lust of command, the boast of leading a few hundred fanatics in his suite, uphold Dolcino in the midst of such dreadful extremities? could it bear him up in his last fearful agony? and it must be remembered, from those extremities it was in repeated instances in his power to escape by flight; and the cup of misery would have passed away from him at the supreme moment, by a single word of recantation. Must there not have been some nobler aim? a deep, however blind instinct of the holiness of his cause? an inextinguishable, even though faint and evanescent hope that God would be with him at the final issue? a strong, unshaken faith in the eventual fulfilment of his prophecies, in the approaching hour of redemption? or, what would

have answered the same purpose, a stubborn conviction that even his utter disappointment, his downfal and martyrdom were ordained for the best? that Providence was maturing his design even by breaking the humble instrument which He seemed to have appointed to work it out?

That is what is called enthusiasm; than which no other mover exercises so great a sway upon the heart of mankind, especially amongst the single-minded and pure men of the lower classes, especially among the inhabitants of remote, unvisited regions. That was the secret of Dolcino's success: it was, be it said with all reverence, the success of those carpenters and fishermen whom the Holy Ghost inspired, whom the meek-souled Sagarelli and his disciples would fain have taken for their models.

But the great error of Dolcino — one might feel tempted to judge on a first glance — lay in his calculation of means and ends. It is every where success that hallows a cause; and there is indeed guilt in the attempt of evident impossibilities. At the head of a few ill-armed, unwarlike adventurers, Dolcino undertook a reformation, a work of redemption, which could only be achieved by the previous conquest of the world. Even if we acquit him of any intentional attack, the very defence, because hopeless, was unjustifiable. Those few deluded

fanatics were by him launched into a contest of which it seemed impossible to anticipate any but a disastrous issue. They were, therefore, wantonly immolated, and their blood must rest the head of their leader.

§ 13. Yet—yet—was Dolcino's case really so hopeless? Was he truly standing up single-handed against the whole world? Was that ill-assembled apostolical band all the physical force he could rely upon?

The combatants immediately under his orders at no time exceeded 3000, his sphere of action was limited to Italy, to its northern division, to one or two counties in that region. But we have searched the memories of the past to little purpose, if we have not made it very clear that there were a hundred other sects, especially of mendicant heretics; there were thousands of Franciscans, both in and out of convents, there were Waldenses and brethren of the Free Spirit, there were tens of thousands of Beghards, Beguins and Turlupins, all of whom shared, in the main, the views, hopes, and aspirations of the Apostles. The conspiracy against the Church — or we should say in its behalf — as it aimed at the redintegration of its original simplicity and holiness —was every where, in its own bosom; it spread as far as the Church itself extended. Had Dolcino taken the offensive from the outset, had he made a loud

appeal to these his natural auxiliaries, or had he at least held his ground a few seasons longer, had he chosen a fitter battle field, and had he not been so hopelessly cut off from all communication, who is prepared to say how many combatants conformity of belief might have started up in his path? Less than a century had elapsed since the heresy of the Albigenses had assumed an attitude which, but for political considerations, arming the potentates of France against it, might have led to the ruin of the Establishment. Ever since that epoch the rottenness of that Establishment had been made more manifest: its enemies had increased in numbers and audacity. The edifice was trembling on its basis, friends and foes equally looked forward to its inevitable and speedy dissolution.

§ 14. Truly, it may be said, even the army of all the beggars of Europe, had Dolcino been able to muster it under his standards, could not have done much for him. Like his own Apostles, nearly all those dissenters were bound to non-resistance principles. Had they even waived these, and actually taken the field, they would have made rather a numerous than a formidable host, cumbrous more than efficient. But Dolcino had an eye to other aids. The aspect of the political world was very different from what it bore at the time of the crusades of Languedoc. A strong antagonism against priestly arrogance had developed

itself in every European community. Papal pride had its fall in Dolcino's own times, with Boniface VIII., in 1303. Henceforth the Church could only be strong by the support of the State. At the time that Dolcino shut himself up in Valsesia, in 1304, he could scarcely foresee that Papacy had gained a permanent, though an overbearing protector in that very King of France, who had so powerfully contributed to its humiliation. Anywhere but in Paris, or at Avignon — where it was in a state of captivity — the Papacy had nothing but enemies. In Italy, especially, — and it was pardonable for an Italian in that age not to look much beyond the Alps — in Italy, especially, the Church had sunk very low in popular estimation. It was in vain that she endeavoured to blend its interests with those of democratic freedom: the very Guelphs fell off from her. In all the Guelph cities, as we have seen at Vercelli, the burgher magistrate had superseded the mitred ruler. It was a family faction, not his ecclesiastical authority, that made Rainieri of Vercelli so strong against Dolcino. Nay, the very election of bishops no longer took place except in obedience to the will of a faction. But for the violence and intrigue of the House of Anjou and France, necessity for order and union would have thrown the Italians into the hands of Ghibelinism. That party, eternally at war

with the Church, was already sufficiently strong in itself to stand up hand to hand against all the might of the opposite party; for a resistance against French influence, it looked abroad in expectation of the support of the Houses of Aragon and Sicily, or of that of the princes who successively wore the silver crown of Germany.

§ 15. Dolcino was, then, not so far from success as one might judge from the actual event. Had, for instance, his own trumpeted hero, Frederic of Sicily, been as enterprising as he was able and daring, or had Dante's champion, Henry VII., been more fortunate, had he been on his guard against the consecrated host that poisoned him at Buonconvento — for the fate of nations too often hangs on the thread of a man's life — the dream of those two far-sighted patriots, the prophet and the poet, might have been fully realised. Had a strong hand seized the Imperial power, forced the fretting Italian cities to as much obedience as would save them from self-destruction, the popes who quitted Rome, in 1305, might never have revisited it. They would either have abided at Avignon, soon to be limited to the petty dignity of French primates, or if they had come to terms with the emperors, it would only have been by bowing to their authority, by being stripped of that sovereignty which, according to Arnold of Brescia and Fre-

deric II., no less than to Dolcino and Dante, made them false to their apostolic mission.

But why should we lose ourselves in unprofitable conjectures? It was otherwise decreed. That combination of circumstances which seemed to betoken the immediate fall of the Papacy, only ushered in its decline. It had yet a long, lingering period of dissolution to go through. There is a tenacity in human institutions which makes them resist instantaneous death. That "Providence" which armed the Franks in defence of Adrian I., which led the Normans of Apulia to the rescue of Gregory VII., which started up a champion for Clement V. in the person of that wicked and unprincipled Philip the Fair of France, or an ambitious statesman like Charles V. of Austria in behalf of Clement VII., equally enlisted the most unnatural auxiliaries—the Russian "schismatics,"—the English "heretics,"—the Ottoman "infidels," in support of Pius VII. in 1800: nay, it called forth such a reprobate as Louis Napoleon Buonaparte to the restoration of Pius IX. The bitterest enemies of Rome at all times miraculously turned out her preservers: from selfish, short-sighted views, they acted against their own true interests no less than against their conscience.

Neither Dolcino nor Dante had the good fortune to find the man according to their own heart, and

both succumbed. "God arose and the enemies of his Church were dispersed." In the same manner did Cola da Rienzi fall, forty years after Dolcino, and Stefano Porcari in 1453, and Fra Girolamo Savonarola in 1498; and the same "Providence" shielded Pius IX. against Mazzini, in 1849. Baffled again and again were all attempts to undo the fatal work of Pepin and Charlemagne, and the Vatican is still standing, and the ugly Pope is still there, cutting Italy in twain, precluding all chances of unity and real peace for that country, and doing its utmost to resist human progress, to fetter down thought all over the world.

How long, O God?

Truly man's history seems written to weigh down our hearts with despondency. And it would incline our ears to the teachings of the old Manichæans; it might yield plausibility to that magnificent theory of Eastern Dualism. Is then, one might be tempted to ask — is evil unconquerable? and are the Powers of Darkness too strong for all the combined efforts of the Children of Light?

Alas! the war is long: hard-won and long-deferred must be the victory; but it is nevertheless assured. Good is no less to prevail in the end. Progress is eternal, incessant: the God of Spirits is with us, if we struggle on with cheerful, manful confidence. Light

pervades matter: it reaches one after another all the most recondite gulphs of chaos. Only the strife is long, and is to end with the world itself. Light must prey upon matter as fire upon its fuel; devouring as it subdues, consuming as it purifies. As death alone brings about man's release, so the day of doom alone will achieve the redemption of his race.

§ 16. Because Sagarelli and Dolcino perished at the stake, because Dante and many other noble hearts were wearied out with disappointments and broken, are we to think that all their work was void of result, that all their words fell unheeded? Truth is great; not one spark of it is ever annihilated.

Notwithstanding all the extravagant joy to which Pope Clement V. abandoned himself on the first tidings of the full success of the warriors of the cross on the banks of the Sesia, he was yet far from having a distinct idea of all the importance of that victory; nor did he well comprehend all the boding of the storm-cloud which had for the last two or three years been gathering on the Alps. The Papal biographer said it, truly*, that Dolcino's errors were not altogether put out by the extinction of their

* "Nec tamen perversum dogma Dulcini ipso extincto penitus est extinctum."—Bernard. Guidon. Vit. Clement V. in Baluz. Vit. Papar. Avenionens. tom. i. p. 67.

propagator. By this he merely means that the sect itself to which Dolcino and his predecessor had given a name, survived them both; for, otherwise, in some sense, what is called the dogma of the Apostles was properly never extinguished at all. The same Pope Clement had, in fact, no slight trouble in following up his advantage by ordering the rooting up of the minor branches of the apostolical communities, which had sprouted out in the diocese of Spoleto, and in other parts of Umbria, Romagna, and Lombardy. These heresies form the main subject of a long and elaborate bull addressed by the pontiff to Rainieri, Bishop of Cremona, in 1311, quoted by Raynald in his Ecclesiastical Annals.* From the words of the bull itself, and from other authorities collected by the annalist by way of illustration, we are enabled to appreciate to some extent the real nature of the evil complained of by the Head of the Church. All these sectarians, says the Pope, "claimed the liberty of the Spirit, by which they understood the licence to do all they pleased." And Cardinal di Torre Arsa, who describes all these heretics as immediate disciples of Fra Dolcino, comes out again with the charge "that they considered it no sin to disarm temptation by indulgence," as usual adding, we don't know whether as cause or

* Raynald. Annal. Ecclesiast. ad ann. 1311, tom. iv. p. 539.

effect, that all these sinful doctrines and practices were always found associated with that most horrid of all blasphemies, "that the Church of Rome had apostatised from the faith of Christ, and was that shameless woman whose abominations were foreshadowed by John in the Apocalypse." *

The prophecies of Joachim, abbot of Flora in Calabria, respecting the coming of a new age, the promulgation of the everlasting gospel, the fulfilment of the two old laws — of the Father and the Son, under a third dispensation—that of the Spirit—all the dreams and fancies with which Peter John Oliva, John of Parma, and other enthusiasts, had been heating the imagination of those swarms of dissenting Franciscans, and of other mendicants of all orders and of no order, during the better part of that restless thirteenth century, appear, from the same testimonies, to have been blended together and to have constituted a new creed, which was, indeed,

* "Meminit de impuris ejusmodi lenonibus hæreticis Joannes Cardinalis Turrecremata, ac Geraldi Sagarelli ejusque discipuli Dulcini, paucis ante annis affecti supplicio, sequaces ait; pervertebant enim plures illecebra hujus dogmatis sordidissimi, nimirum fornicationes et adulteria commissa ad sedandam tentationem non esse peccatum. Iidem vero hæretici hanc blasphemam vocem in Romanam Ecclesiam vomebant: *Ecclesia Romana est illa meretrix, quæ a fide Christi apostatavit, de qua scribit Joannes in Apocalypsi.*" — Raynald, Annal. Ecclesiast. tom. iv. p. 541.

embraced by a great many sects of various origin, views, and tendencies; but which was, whether by right or wrong, invariably traced to Dolcino's own brotherhood, and to which that apostolic leader seems to have given the peculiar stamp of his own powerful mind.*

§ 17. A few years after the enactment of these pontifical decrees in Italy, in 1320, some branches of the apostolical sect were still flourishing nearer to the Papal see itself, in the south of France. It was in that year, as we have seen†, that Peter of Lugo, a Spaniard, was brought before the Inquisition of Toulouse, and there declared himself the member of a brotherhood established many years before in Galicia, by one of Sagarelli's missionaries. He was a pious, earnest man, and his uprightness and candour won him the regard even of his stern Dominican judges, who proceeded in his case with unwonted leniency, and succeeded after two years' persuasion in bringing him to a full confession, as well as to a partial recantation of his errors. His profession of faith is calculated to throw considerable light on the subject.‡ With the exception of a few quaker-like

* Raynald, Annal. Ecclesiast. tom. iv. p. 542, &c.

† See *antè*, chap. ii. § 14., chap. iii. § 28.

‡ Limborch, Hist. Inquisit. p. 65, 66; and Liber Sententiar. p. 360.

notions about the lawfulness of oaths and of war, it is impossible for the utmost stretch of priestly ingenuity to construe those errors into anything besides the most profound detestation of the Church of Rome; not, however, in its institutions, but simply in its persons. The good man distinguished between the carnal Church, — that is, the Pope, cardinals, priests, and monks, such as they then were—and the spiritual Church, such as the Apostles would reconstruct it, exactly on the same basis, with precisely the same hierarchy, but with men that should not depart from the strictest precepts of apostolical discipline.

§ 18. In the same manner and with no better success, other disciples of the same school went about the countries of Languedoc and Gascony, sometimes under the garb of their order, and bearing its name, more often under a variety of disguises. In the year 1368, at a council held at Lavaur by the archbishops of Narbonne and of Toulouse, new and more stringent laws were issued against men of this description *; and Mosheim, who has followed up the subject with his wonted industry, finds† that the sect still existed in Germany and other countries down to the times of Boniface IX., at the beginning

* Harduin. Concil. tom. vii. p. 1818.

† Mosheim, Ecclesiast. Histor. vol. ii. p. 629, and note.

of the fifteenth century, and that an apostle, named William, was burnt at the stake in 1402.

§ 19. This as to the name merely. But the spirit of the sect,—the leading thought,—the faith which Sagarelli and Dolcino had, if not originated, at least sealed with their blood—who shall say how far it was propagated from age to age, communicated from sect to sect? who shall say under how many different forms it revived, how deep it sunk into the hearts of mankind? It had been distinctly stated, both by Catholic and Protestant writers*, either by way of reproach or of self-gratulation, that some stray members of Dolcino's fraternity made good their escape from the valley of the Sesia into Val d' Angrogna, Val Pelice, and the other well-known abodes of the Waldenses. The distance from Dolcino's encampment to those western valleys of Piedmont could be travelled over in two or three days; and nothing could be more probable than that some of the weaker disciples of the Novarese Apostle, from sheer inability to withstand the terrible hardships by which their faith was tried for above two years, either fell off from their chief, especially on his removal from one camp to another, or had the good fortune to escape with life from the final onslaught, or that,

* Hieronym. Vignier. Theatr. Historic. ad ann. 1308, ap. Spondan. Annal. Baron. Continuat. tom. i. p. 364.

falling into the hands of the crusaders, they purchased their safety by one of those subterfuges to which Dolcino himself had trained them; or, finally, in any other way slipped through the fingers of their captors, and found a safe refuge in the solitude of the western Alps. One of them is indeed traditionally described as having travelled in his flight as far as *Bellentro in Switzerland* — properly Bellentre in Savoy — where he died of his wounds.*

But even supposing that none of Dolcino's immediate followers, and none of the earlier envoys of Sagarelli, ever visited those Waldensian retreats, there is no doubt but much of the spirit of those apostolic sectarians was breathed into the pure and honest hearts of those primitive Christians. A communion of faith between those different brethren of the mountains existed from very remote periods. The Waldenses of the twelfth century did not, as we have seen †, quarrel with any part of the dogma, or even of the discipline of the Church, but limited their objections to the scandalous abuses which avarice and ambition had introduced into its bosom. Like the disciples of Peter de Bruys and Henri, like the apostolic sects of Burgundy, in the same age, they had adopted Dolcino's views ere this heresi-

* See Appendix A. Sagarelli's Son.

† Chap. i. § 16—19.

arch had made his appearance. They continued faithful to them long after he had vanished from the stage of the world.

Now the descendants of Waldo's disciples, the "poor men of Lyons," are still living and flourishing. They are, perhaps, the only "mendicant" sect, the only apostolic community that has been preserved; — preserved, not perhaps without some great providential design. The torch of freedom and truth which they fed at so dear a cost in their Alpine wilderness, is not only still allowed to burn bright and serene in their native valleys, but shines at this present moment in the midst of some of the most polished, — of the only free cities of Italy. The Waldenses are invading Piedmont. So long as the Sardinian States enjoy even the phantom of constitutional government awarded to them by Charles Albert, — who, to his eternal honour be it spoken, was always fain to show as much justice and mercy to his Protestant subjects as he dared* — so long as Waldensian chapels are erected both at Turin and Genoa—so long as Italian versions of the Bible, and

* Bert. I 'Valdesi, &c., cap. xiv. Emancipazione Civile e Politica dei Valdesi dall' anno 1847 al 1848. The publication of that excellent book itself is already a splendid proof of the progress of liberal ideas both among the people of Piedmont and in its government, especially if we compare it to the course followed by the Tuscan and Austrian governments.

even Protestant tracts and journals, such as "La Buona Novella" of Turin, openly circulate there, the cause of Dolcino must be looked upon as anything but lost, even in that last citadel of Popery, —in Italy itself. Such virtue as may lie latent in the pure doctrines of the gospel, has now a chance of full development, even in Italian lands.

§ 20. But it was not merely among their fellow-believers in the Piedemontese valleys, that Dolcino's disciples left visible traces of the vitality of his ideas. The spirit of the sect survived in many parts of the Peninsula, and still more beyond the Alps, long after the name of its leader had been effaced from the memory of mankind. The fugitive Apostles found everywhere friendly reception and sympathy. They were everywhere adopted among the Fraticelli of Italy and France, among the Beghards of Germany, and the Lolhards or Lollards, who sprung from the latter sect, both in that country and in the Netherlands and in England. Nothing could be easier than to exchange the tunic of Sagarelli for the frock of the Fransciscan ranter, or for the sack-cloth of the "Brother of the True Penitence." It was always the same host under new colours; under the same ragged banner of poverty, it was always the same war against Roman luxury and pride. What endless trouble and anxiety all those begging sects caused to

the Papal See, throughout the fourteenth and sixteenth century, may be argued from the fact, which, we believe, has already been stated, that of the Fraticelli alone more than two thousand were doomed to the flames.* Of the Beghards, more than thirty distinct sects were known to flourish at the same time.† Had any, or all of these, been better seconded by the always weak and irresolute, often treacherous German emperors, — by such monarchs as Louis IV. of Bavaria, Charles IV. of Luxemburg, Wenceslaus of Bohemia, or Frederic III. of Austria, the great Reformation of the sixteenth century, — which, even at that period, was partly impeded and frustrated by the hesitation and bad faith of another Austrian sovereign, Charles V., — would most probably have been anticipated by many years. At any rate, it is impossible not to refer that great revolution to the influence long exercised by those suffering sects on the minds of the lower classes; and, through them, it is also impossible not to rank Fra Dolcino and his disciples among the precursors of Luther and Calvin.

§ 21. Mosheim ‡, indeed, objects to the strict orthodoxy, to the uncompromising Papism of the

* Mosheim, Eccles. Hist. vol. ii. p. 670, and note.

† Ibid. p. 579, note.

‡ Mosheim, Ketzergeschichte, book ii. § ii.

Apostles and of all other Italian sectarians. He finds fault with their compliance with most of the Catholic practices, with their observance — so far as they found it practicable — of Church fasts. Had it been in their power to carry their views into effect, he seems to think, no real material change in the hierarchy of the Catholic Church would have taken place. The reforming axe would never have struck at the root of the evil. To the corrupt clergy then in power they would have substituted another no less corruptible priesthood. There would have been a revolution without permanent amelioration.

But he seems to have lost sight of the fact, that all reformers take their start from the same ground; they all begin with the same professions: they come "not to destroy, but to confirm." But the first attempts at improvement have no other result than to reveal all the unsoundness and rottenness of the old edifice, and to urge upon them, in spite of themselves, the necessity for thorough demolition and fundamental reconstruction.

In so far as the principle of Lutheran Reformation lay in stripping the Church of all power to enforce its own opinion by material coercion, and compelling her to rely on the unarmed means of persuasion, — thereby indirectly, but most efficiently establishing the right of freedom of conscience, and placing all

faith and worship on a footing of equality before the law, — the Italian heretic of the thirteenth century, who would have taken from the Church all its wealth and worldly influence, would certainly have conferred as great a benefit on the human race as the German monk of the sixteenth.

§ 22. Nay, in our opinion, not only have Luther and Calvin not gone beyond the ideas of Sagarelli and Dolcino, but with a view to accommodate their doctrines to the imperfection of human nature, with a hope to avoid unnecessary collision with those lay authorities who backed them with all the strength of their patronage, the reformers of the age of Leo X. and Clement VII. have stopped short of many of the levelling theories of the mendicant sects of the days of Clement V., and of his successors in Avignon; they have patched up churches and congregations in which the sleek bishop has survived the fate of the "Bishop of Bishops;" they have tried to reconcile Catholicism with nationality, liberty with authority, evangelical humility with worldly respectability: hence their work has been looked upon (by men who have on that account, not very justly, been branded as infidels) as a transient and inconsistent scheme — a poor make-shift.* And in the bosom of those time-serving denominations, new

* Gibbon's Decline and Fall, &c. chap. liv. Character and Consequences of the Reformation.

communities have been at all times, and are still, springing up, — the Methodists, Quakers, Shakers, Mormons, and a hundred other sects of "literal Christians," all of them true to Dolcino's fruitful ideas — though they may never have heard his name — all of them, in spite of some oddities and absurdities, active in the development of true apostolical Christianity.

By the Reformation of the sixteenth century, nothing has been positively determined, except the vital, holy, ever-blessed principle of unbounded freedom of inquiry. It very little matters by what inscrutable ways of Providence, — it matters still less with what egregious unconsciousness, or with what stubborn repugnance on the part of some of the Protestants themselves, mankind have arrived at this all-important result. Suffice it, that the human race cannot retrograde. Truth may shift its ground from Jerusalem to Rome, from Rome to Oxford, from Oxford to a Mormon city, but never releases its hold of the earth. It is not of the least consequence what Jesuitism in France, or Puseyism in England may do towards re-erecting the banner of authority. Men will sound Christian evidence to its depth, they will strip the sanctuary of its veil, they must needs see God face to face.

§ 23. In the future discussion of such vital mat-

ters, the heresy of Fra Dolcino, the heresy of all "literal Christians" will have its due share. In fact, it is, even at the present day, every where most powerfully agitating the minds of all true and earnest believers. After the experiment of eighteen centuries, after a variety of theories built up on a free and easy, a specious interpretation of the spirit of the Gospel, the world is every day drawing nearer and nearer to the conclusion that it is the letter alone, the whole letter, and nothing but the letter, that can save, and must govern us; the precepts of Christ implicitly obeyed; the examples of the apostles closely followed. The communism which they preached must become the law of mankind. The day must come when there will be amongst us "none that lack; for as many as are possessors of land and houses will sell them, and bring the prices of the things that are sold, and lay them down at the apostles' feet, amd distribution will be made unto every man according as he hath need."*

§ 24. Amongst the mad freaks of Communism, whether ancient or modern, whether religious or political, there is one eternal truth, acknowledged by every man in theory, but to which the world will eventually, whether from love or fear, be made to bow in practice, and that is, the right of every man

* Acts of the Apostles, iv. 34—36.

to a place in this world into which God has sent him. This need not be effected by agrarian or social enactments, not by violent spoliation, or violation of the right of property; not, at least, until experiments have been made to ascertain to what extent an enlightened, far-reaching, and truly provident system of poor-laws, of education, of emigration, howsoever costly, may provide for all the legitimate wants of our fellow-beings. But until poverty and misery have put forth their claims to a share in the birthright of the Lord, till a Church and State be established at whose feet as much of the wealth of the possessors of lands and houses be laid as may be distributed unto every man according to his just want, let no human society arrogate the title of a Christian community. It is only when Lazarus has risen from his bed of wretchedness that Dives may hope for peace and security, either in this world or in another. This great consummation of God's ultimate will, that men should suffer from no evils except from such as were eternally ordained by him, but should not add to them by mutual injustice and cruelty, this great law of humanity to man, the apostles of the thirteenth century had mainly in view. Like Anthony of Egypt, Francis of Assisi, Peter of Waldo, and many others, poor Sagarelli "sold everything that he had," and shared it with

his brethren. Now this rigid, total expropriation may not have been contemplated by the All-wise Lawgiver. As the world is now constituted, it may not prove the most expedient remedy for the manifold ills human flesh is heir to. It will be enough if the rich man considers himself as trusted with the stewardship of the good things that have been lavished upon him. And it will be no harm if he be held accountable for his administration to his fellowmen no less than to God.

§ 25. That the general frailty and selfishness of mankind, and especially of wealthy prelates and fat monks, should have found out that Christ's words need not too inexorably bind them, was indeed too natural; but that charity, however improvident, and asceticism, however bigoted, should be accounted heresy, that they should be looked upon as the most capital of all offences, that they should be dealt with with every refinement of cruelty, branded with posthumous infamy, and made an object of horror to the latest generations, is somewhat more difficult to understand. Yet such was doubtless the fate of Sagarelli and Dolcino. The hatred of Rome did not stop at the threshold of their graves. It visited their memory with unslaked animosity. For more than two centuries, all over Europe, and in nearly two-thirds of the globe at the present day — wherever

the successors of Boniface VIII. and Clement V. are held infallible — the name of those heresiarchs has been, and is, vaguely but obstinately associated with every crime that ever disgraced the name of man. From Giovanni Villani to Muratori, and from this latter again to the Cavaliere Cibrario, the same false and absurd charges against their heinous tenets and hideous morals have been confidently repeated, without examination, almost against conviction; partly from credulous bigotry, partly from mere habit and parrot-like iteration, but partly also from necessity to compound with the censor, and to keep on good terms with civil and ecclesiastical authorities.

§ 26. Among Protestants again, the subject has always excited less interest than it deserved. In early times, all intent upon fighting their own battles, anxious to keep within the limits of discretion, and in the very schism to leave a loophole open for future compromise, the reformers of the sixteenth century, with few exceptions, carefully avoided all connection or solidarity with men whose names seemed irretrievably lost in the opinion of mankind; they abandoned the Albigenses to the obloquy that had been heaped upon them, and all but ignored the apostles, the Stedingers, Peter de Bruys, Henri, Tanquelin, and Eon de l'Etoile, all men whose

opinions and life had perhaps no little influence on the advancement of religious freedom, whose history would be most essential to the full understanding of its final success.

About Tanquelin and the Stedinger, about the apostolical sects of France and Germany, the positive facts will, perhaps, never come into light. But the Italian Brotherhood of Dolcino made its appearance at a time and in a country, where a thousand pens were daily at work—at work in the convent, in the cabinet, in the town-hall. Public opinion in Italy, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, might be misguided, but could not be hushed up. Truth might be perverted, but not altogether obscured. Even through the bitter invectives of the bigoted monk, even through the gross mis-statement of the careless notary-public, glimpses of probability will occasionally shine forth. Dolcino's name, and many of the essential particulars of his story, occur in at least a score of the contemporaneous chronicles with which Lombardy and Tuscany were in those days inundated. However vast and perplexing, the history of Italy rests on more solid basis than that of any other European country. Out of those records we have taken enough, we believe, to have come to some positive knowledge of Dolcino's actions. We have absolutely no statements on the subject, except

those of his adversaries; but their glaring exaggerations, their patent contradictions, have done more towards his exculpation than might have been achieved by the most zealous apologist. It is the infinite trouble, the virulence and impatience with which his guilt is attempted to be proved, that, above all other arguments, forces upon us the conviction of his innocence.

§ 27. The memory of the dread heresiarch was long preserved in the primitive region which he chose for the theatre of his exploits. Restored to their plundered and desecrated homes, the men of Mosso and Trivero could find no peace there, even after the fire and the sword of the Crusaders had delivered them of the presence of the accursed Gazzari. The hill that had been the head-quarters of Dolcino's camp, the Mount Zebello, frowned still menacing upon the last-named town. Like Mount Pilatus at Lucern, it wrapped its head in eternal clouds; and under the name of Mount Dolcino, or Mount Gazzaro, it cast its ominous gloom on the devoted neighbourhood: the foul fiends of the whirlwind and storm, driven thither from happier lands by the exorcisms of incautious priests, kept up their infernal Sabbath on that excommunicated ground. Year after year the echoes of that desolate summit were alive with perpetual thunder, and incessant hail showers spread havoc and consternation throughout the terrified district.

This happened especially when avarice tempted some godless miscreant to venture into the accursed ground on the mountain summit, with a view to unearth and possess himself of the wealth and treasury which the heresiarch was said to have buried in some cave in the neighbourhood, and which was now left in the keeping of a whole host of demons.* The poor guileless peasantry saw but too clearly that the vows to which they had bound themselves in aid of the Crusade, had only helped them by half. Nothing but their bare lands and dismantled dwelling had been restored to them. No harvest was ever suffered to come to maturity: famine and distress were no less heavy upon them: and the real evils, were enhanced by dire portents and supernatural terrors. Of the many wanderers who had dragged themselves back to the land of their birth, not a few were fain once more to turn their back upon it, preferring to confront even the miseries of exile, rather than endure the scourges and the perils of their haunted abode.

§ 28. At last they betook themselves to new supplications and fresh pledges. Against the malevolence of the fiends they implored the assistance of

* Bellini, Vercellino, Descrizione e Successi di Serravalle e dei Luoghi circonvicini, Vercelli, 1649. A MS. in the Municipal Archive of Vercelli.

God and of St. Bernard. This is not the famous Abbot of Clairvaux, the champion of the Church in the twelfth century; but the so-called Apostle of the Alps, Bernard, a native of Menthon in Savoy, and for a long time archdeacon of Aosta, who died in 1008, the founder of the famous hospices on the Alpine passes that still bear his name. Devotion to this venerable archimandrite is paid by the inhabitants of the whole western chain of the Alps; and on many a mountain summit, in many a lonely valley, his convent or hospice, or at least his chapel, is reared. Such a shrine was now, *ex voto*, raised in honour of the Saint, on the summit of Mount Zebello, which, ever since, dropped its ominous appellation of "Mons Dulcini," and "Mons Gazzarorum," and became "Mons Sancti Bernardi," though it must not be confounded with the Great or Little St. Bernard, athwart which lie two of the main roads, from the Valais and from Savoy into the vale of Aosta.

John Bonacci, the notary-public or town-clerk of Trivero, who furnished us with all these particulars, and appended them to the History of Dolcino, to which we have often alluded *, gives a fair description of the sanctuary, "how it was built, with God's help, on the very top of the hill, how it boasted of

* Hist. Dulcin. p. 441, 442.

two altars and was decorated with many pictures, especially of the Blessed Virgin, and paved with marble and studded with stones, so as to make a very neat and handsome building, and be a credit to the town."

He adds, that on a certain appointed day, the 5th of June of every year, being the anniversary of their patron, St. Bernard, the people not only of Trivero, but also of Mosso, Coggiola, Cossato, &c., with their parsons and curates at their head, and with a great display of crosses and banners, all, — that is, one person at least for every hearth in the above-named villages, — repaired to the shrine in solemn procession. The inhabitants of Crepaçuore, Curino, Mortillengo, and in fact the whole of the district, never failed to flock in great numbers — men and women—to that yearly solemnity; attracted not only by the ample indulgences with which several Popes have endowed those altars, and by the peculiar efficacy of the masses celebrated there, but also by the bounty of a pound loaf of wheaten bread, which the men of Trivero, "not from any obligation, but out of spontaneous charity, and hospitable kindness," awarded to every person who may be willing to join them in their devotions; of such loaves "never less than one thousand four hundred were known to have been distributed in a single day."

The partiality of those mountaineers for St. Bernard, did not, however, render them unmindful of their duty to other heavenly protectors and benefactors. Besides that main solemnity of the 5th of June, there were other days which were kept holy, in their own way, by masses, benedictions and processions, in the latter of which every family was duly represented by one, at least, of its members. These were days set apart in honour of St. Ann, St. Magdalen, and St. Grato. In all of these the huge wooden St. Bernard was taken down from its niche on the main altar, and issued forth from the chapel to be promenaded round and round the summit of the hill, on a ground strewn with flowers and boughs, with a great waving of standards, and ribbons and garlands, and with all the glitter and pomp of priestly attire.

By all these expiatory performances Dolcino's ghost was finally laid. The men of Trivero were allowed to sleep undisturbed, and if they were not altogether free from roaring thunder, flooding rain, and ravaging hail, they had at least no greater share of such scourges than what usually fall to the lot of their neighbours. All customs, however, even the best, are liable to fall into desuetude. Whether the ardour of the people of the valleys abated, or the inhabitants of Trivero found the distribution of so

many thousand pounds of bread too onerous, it is not clearly made out; but the fact is, that towards the middle of the last century, the festival of St. Bernard's, and all other devotions paid to his shrine were—it is hardly known how or why—it is not stated whether all at once or gradually— discontinued; the mountain was left to its dreary solitude, and the chapel itself went rapidly to decay, and might have ended by sinking under the weight of yearly snows.

Only very lately, in 1837, August 23rd, Monsignor Gian Pietro Losanna, Bishop of Biella, anxious to renew all obsolete religious practices in his diocese, repaired to the summit of the mountain with a large flock of priests and dignitaries of the Church: he gave orders for the reconstruction of the sanctuary in somewhat larger dimensions and with greater pretensions to architectural style, and exerted all his episcopal influence towards the restoration of the ancient solemnities.*

The age, however, seemed less propitious to the

* See the Gazzetta Piemontese, No. 206, Sept. 11, 1837. Also, Verbale della Solenne Pontificale Benedizione dell' Oratorio di San Bernardo, fattasi il 17 Luglio, 1839. A MS. in the Parochial Archive of Trivero. Also, Discorso per la Rinnovazione dell' Antica Festa di San Bernardo di Menthon sui monti sopra Trivero Biellese, &c. &c. pronunziato da Paolo Gaghardini, Biella, 1839.

display of popular fervour. The people of Trivero alone could be induced to answer the call of their zealous pastor; and even they limited their festivities to a single procession in the year, on the same anniversary of St. Bernard's day; whilst of the beautiful one pound white loaves with which the bodily strength of the faithful was to be held up during the toils of that pilgrimage, no further mention was made.

A sad falling off from the happy days in which the eager spirit of the faithful, we are informed, never rested till it had reared up the humble but solid sanctuary on Mount Zebello, "in fifty hours." But it must be also allowed that the saints take now less pains to guard their interests here below*; for the same authorities assure us, that in the good old times, whenever the zeal of those good mountaineers seemed at all to flag, "a huge hideous he-goat" would be seen perambulating the skirts of the ominous hill, and "cowled fiends and sheeted phantoms and spectres with asses' heads," monsters in every shape, manifest in every shade of moon and twilight, visible, audible, all but tangible, so as to shake the very hearts of those for whom to "see is to believe."

* Baggiolini, Dolcino e i Patareni, p. 171.

APPENDIX.

Recent Writers on the Subject of Fra Dolcino. — Professor Baggiolini — Dr. Krone — Father Rimella. — A. Sagarelli's Son. — B. Dolcino's Portraits. — Particulars about him and Margaret of Trent. — C. Dolcino's Companions. — Ambrogio Salamone — D. First Hostilities — at Gattinara — at Campertogno. — Leaders of the Crusade — The Marquises of Montferrat and Saluzzo. — Nicholas Trivet, the English Dominican. — Anecdotes of Theodolind Queen of the Lombards. — E. The Rector of Serravalle. — F. Milano Sola. — G. Missionaries to Dolcino. — H. Marco Miretti. — I. The Thirty Amazons. — J. Heretic and Catholic Atrocities. — K. The Last Conflict. — L. Simone da Colobiano. — M. James de Quaregna. — N. Papal Munificence. — O. The Execution. — P. Campo Dolcino.

THE memoir of Fra Dolcino and his time, which has been here submitted to the reader, rests on documents to which either the epoch, the writer's character, or other circumstances would seem to give all the importance of historical authenticity. But there circulates in Northern Italy, and especially in the districts of Novara and Vercelli, once the stage of Dolcino's exploits, and for a long time the haunt of vague terrors connected with his memory, a variety of rumours, which, although very plainly the work of popular exaggeration, and often bearing the marks of palpable absurdity, have nevertheless that interest which tradition must always have in the eyes of diligent inquirers.

Tradition is the smoke revealing the existence of the hidden fire of truth. Only, in order that mere report may be fairly entitled to our attention, it must arise spontaneous from popular belief, and not, as it frequently happens, result from the mere distortion of facts by some unskilful chronicler, whose blunders will afterwards sink amongst the multitude, and there assume all the authority of immemorial oral tradition.

It is only by fortuitous coincidence, no doubt, and we would attach no serious importance to the fact—that Dolcino's execution occurs in the same year, 1307, from which the earliest Swiss cantons date their emancipation. It would seem as if that eventful year was under some peculiar atmospheric influence, which gave mankind extraordinary inventive powers, so as to send down insoluble puzzles to posterity; for, if we were to sift our positive knowledge with all that is current amongst the people, we should come, with respect to Fra Dolcino, to the same conclusion adopted by some German critics on the subject of William Tell—we should, that is, doubt the very existence of the portentous personage.

The popular myth of Fra Dolcino had been embodied in a specious narrative by Professor Baggiolini, a resident of Vercelli, published not many years ago*; a work which a German of uncommon scholarly abilities, Dr. Julius Krone, has thought fit to translate, or rather to paraphrase, into his native language, with such additions, alterations, and notes, as his more extensive reading naturally suggested.†

Professor Baggiolini was destitute of the commonest

* Baggiolini, Dolcino e i Patareni, Memorie Storiche. Novara, 1838, 12mo.

† Krone, Frà Dolcino und die Paterener, historische Episode aus den Piemontesischen Religionskriegen. Leipsig, 1844, 8vo.

qualifications as an historian. Startling errors are to be met with in his pages which would prevent any man of sense from taking him as a safe guide in his researches. He tells us, for instance *, that Fra Dolcino, on his flight from Trent, "crossed the Julian Alps, and after traversing a part of Italy came first into the dioceses of Vercelli and Novara." He informs his readers †, that the interval elapsing between Dolcino's capture and his execution was owing to the journey of the legates of Vercelli "to and from Rome," where they had been sent to Pope Clement V., to ask his good pleasure as to the prisoner's fate.

Besides these unlucky slips, which give us no exalted idea of the Professor's knowledge of the rudiments of geography and general history, several statements occur, as to local facts, against which the reader may not always be so easily on his guard. He brings into the field against Dolcino, such men as Manfred of Saluzzo, in behalf of whom an *alibi* might be easily proved; and others, such as Rainer Montferrat, who never had any existence. Concerning this latter, the German translator, with all his good faith and reliance on his original, was so egregiously puzzled, that he ventured to inquire of Professor Baggiolini himself, where he had found any record of such a person, as no allusion to him occurs in any of the historians of the House of Montferrat. "My application to the Professor," Krone concludes, "led to no satisfactory result ‡, as the Professor was utterly ignorant of the subject." With all that may be said to its disparagement, however, the work of Baggiolini cannot be passed over with contempt. The Professor was some

* P. 37.

† P. 141. The same oversight occurs in Krone, p. 89.

‡ Krone, p. 55., note.

time the Keeper of the Municipal Archives of Vercelli; and he had, as a tutor and instructor, free access to the private libraries and records of several conspicuous families of that town and country, such as the Avogadro, Fiorella, Arboreo, Vialardi, &c. &c.

For all his assertions on the subject before him, he refers now to one, now to another, of the documents which were thus placed under his inspection. The public documents are almost invariably misquoted; and even the Catalogue, printed by Baggiolini himself, of the most precious MSS. of Vercelli, bearing the name of "Codici Biscioni," collected by order of Ludovico Sforza, Duke of Milan, in the 15th century, can hardly ever be depended on for accuracy and correctness. As to the private papers, Baggiolini himself avowed that he had seen them, "at some time or other, in the libraries of families either no longer extant, or fallen into such decline that their collections are either sold or dispersed through neglect." He added that oftentimes he quoted, as historical facts, such versions of Dolcino's deeds as he heard in conversation from members of those families whose papers he was allowed to examine. So it is that we see him quoting in a careless and almost enigmatic manner, the "MSS. Avog."—"MSS. Fior. &c.,"—without ever mentioning, for instance, in which of the many houses of the Avogadro or other family the MSS. in question were found, to what epoch they belong, or what weight other circumstances may give to them: for, most assuredly, in the farrago of manuscripts in the archives of a noble house, a distinction may be drawn between contemporary title-deeds, diplomas, charters, &c., and the mere rhapsodies of some obscure almoner, secretary, or even conceited member of the family in recent times—papers which only remain manuscripts, because it might be a public outrage to give them to the press.

With one of such papers, by its wretched style plainly belonging to the worst part of the 17th or 18th century, any reader may make himself familiar. It exists in the King's Library at Turin, in the archives at Vercelli, and elsewhere; the oldest copy, dated 1694, is in the hands of the rector or vicar of Trivero.*

For a good many of the incidents in his narrative, Baggiolini rests, as he says, on the support of Modena's Vercellese history. Modena was a canon of the Cathedral of Vercelli in the 17th century, and a writer of good repute. His Italian history exists in manuscript, in the King's Library at Turin, in the archives of Vercelli, and elsewhere. Under the date of 1307 he consecrates only a few words to Fra Dolcino, referring, however, to his Latin history for fuller particulars on the subject. Now Modena's Latin history is nowhere to be found. The Cavaliere Promis, the King's librarian, the Padre Bruzza, a learned Barnabite, who has given all his lifetime to the history of Vercelli, and other industrious scholars, have in vain looked for it. Baggiolini, who could only have quoted from Modena's Latin history, as the Italian version has nothing to his purpose, was taken to task on the subject, and answered that he positively knew of two copies of that work in Latin, though he could only point out one copy, which was, to his best knowledge, in the University Library at Turin. The keeper of that library, however, knows nothing about it.

And yet, even supposing all the authorities quoted by

* Racconto dell' Introduzione del Eresiarca Frà Dolcino con li suoi perfidi Compagni Gevardo Segarello di Parma e Longino Cattaneo di Bergamo con la bella Margarita di Trento, nella valle di Sesia ed altri luoghi, l' anno del Signore 1304. The copy at Vercelli is stated to have been transcribed from a MS. probably of the 17th century, now in possession of the architect, Giuseppe Lavini.

Baggiolini to be utterly worthless,—even suspecting him of wilful imposition upon the public,—his book would always be entitled to the consideration of conscientious writers, for it is difficult to suppose all his statements to be mere inventions or dreams on his part, and it is more natural to suppose that he picked up his information here and there, deriving a great part of it either from mere hearsay, or from narratives grounded on the same hearsay, possessing, therefore, only a secondary importance as positive materials of history, but not altogether to be despised as traditional illustrations of it.

Although, therefore, we deemed it unadvisable to disturb the course of our foregoing narrative by the introduction of episodes, which seemed to rest on questionable authority, we also considered it our duty to write down, in a series of notes, the most important points on which Baggiolini's narrative differs from earlier accounts, taking good care to point out those frequent instances in which the worthy Professor is rather rudely contradicted by well authenticated historical truth.

Besides the works above mentioned, we have also taken into consideration an account of Dolcino's doings, published towards the close of the last century by the Padre Filippo da Rimella *, a native of the Valsesia, well acquainted with the localities of that lofty region, and a truthful man besides, incapable, one would think, of wilful deception, whatever otherwise his claims to sound criticism and plain good sense may be, and who also talks of im-

* Orazione sopra la sacra Lega de' Valsesiani contro l'Eretico Dulcino e seguaci, con tre Appendici, e con riflessioni analoghe agli errori e ai bisogni dei correnti tempi, del Padre Dottor Filippo da Rimella, M. R. dedicata, &c.; Vercelli, 1793. The discourse was delivered at Scopa on the 24th Aug. 1790, the anniversary of the famous League and Covenant of the Valsesians in 1305 which forms the subject of the book.

portant documents belonging to a very remote period, to which, it seems, he had access, but which are now in all probability lost to our curiosity. The object of his book was altogether polemical; he wished to bring the remote past to bear on the immediate present; to draw some uncharitable comparisons between the ruthless Dolcino and the amiable reformer Bishop Ricci of Pistoia,—between the fanatic Gazari of the 14th century and the sneering Jacobins of the 18th; with what success to the cause of religion it is for his readers to decide, but certainly with little benefit to himself, since we are informed by the Cavaliere Morbio* that the liberals of the Cisalpine republic turned against him on the first success of the French sans-culottes, and so harassed and persecuted him as to break his heart and bring him with sorrow to his grave—for no other crime, says the historian, than that of proudly standing his ground as a true Christian minister, and denouncing the folly and impiety of his age.

A. Sagarelli's Son.

Amongst the most distinguished companions of Dolcino, from his first arrival at Gattinara to his downfall at Mount Zebello, some writers† mention one Gherardo Sagarelli, a relative—some even say a son or nephew—of his namesake, the founder of the Order of the Apostles, who was burnt at Parma in 1300. Baggiolini, followed by

* Morbio, Storia dei Municipii Italiani, Milano, 1841, vol. v. Storia della Città e Diocesi di Novara, p. 116.

† Baggiolini, Dolcino e i Patareni, p. 37. Krone, Dolcino und die Patarener, p. 39.; Racconto dell' Introduzione del Eresiarcha Frà Dolcino con li perfidi suoi compagni, Gherardo Segarello di Parma &c., MS.

Krone, places this Sagarelli at the head of one of the divisions of Dolcino's host in the most important encounters that band of heretics had to sustain, according to their version, from 1303 to 1307. They represent him as fighting desperately the last day on Mount Zebello, adding that he alone had the rare fortune to escape from the cave in which Dolcino was overpowered, and that, after tarrying for some time in those valleys at the head of a few of the fugitives, he at last crossed over to Switzerland, where he died in consequence of his wounds. The very spot where he ended his mortal career is named by Baggiolini, "Bellentro."* Such a place is not easily to be found in any Swiss map. Krone†, who follows Baggiolini to the letter, avoids all difficulty by simply saying "in Switzerland." That place may, however, be Bellentre in Tavantaise, Duchy of Savoy.

It is almost impossible to escape the conviction that this junior Segarello or Sagarelli was altogether an imaginary personage; and as he was found neither among the dead nor the captives, nothing is more natural than to account for his almost miraculous disappearance, and his tragical yet obscure end, in some all but nameless spot, by supposing that the populace, on hearing Dolcino preaching in the name of Sagarelli, and styling him his fellow-labourer in the Lord's vineyard, fancied at the time — and their surmise survived among the popular traditions — that Sagarelli was actually one of the companions and lieutenants of the heresiarch.

For the rest, it is very evident that Sagarelli had no son, as no mention of any improper connexion on his part occurs in the narrative of Salimbeni and other writers intent on blackening his memory. And no allusion to the name of Sagarelli is to be found in the enumeration

* Baggiolini, p. 139.; Racconto dell' Introduzione, &c.

† Krone, p. 89.

made by Dolcino himself, in his Second Epistle, of the most gifted disciples of his order.

B. Dolcino's Portraits.

Some curious particulars respecting Dolcino and Margaret's personal appearance, their origin and early career, may be derived from various—unfortunately not very reliable—sources.*

Dolcino was a native of Prato, near Romagnano—not, as some have averred, of Trontano, in Val d'Ossola.† The latter village was perhaps the birthplace of his father, the priest Julio, who may have been appointed parish priest at Prato, where his son was born. In the neighbourhood of Prato is a village, called Cavallirio, in the parish records of which, it is pretended, Dolcino's birth and baptism are registered. This, if not positively true, would at least be plausible, as the priest Julio, both on account of the illegitimacy of his child, and of the too close ties of consanguinity, might have had some scruple in performing the ceremony with his own hand, and would have preferred to send him to some near obscure church.

In contradiction to what Benvenuto da Imola wrote, who must, however, be considered as the best authority, and who described Dolcino as a man of diminutive size,

* Racconto dell' Introduzione del Eresiarcha Fra Dolcino, &c.

† Nevertheless Monignor Bascapè in his "Novaria, seu de Ecclesia Novariensi (Novara, 1612, p. 144.), says most distinctly: "Nos autem Traguntano Ossulæ vico, ortum comperimus, Julii cujusdam Presbyteri filium, idque ex commentariolo quodam, de rebus fratris Dulcini, qui apud Inquisitorem Vercellensem inventus est, rudi quidem stylo conscripto, sed eo tempore quo res eæ acciderunt."

the records to which we allude depict him as a man of tall stature, with a high forehead, large piercing eyes, an aquiline sharp-pointed nose, and prominent nether-jaw. Margaret is said to have been of middle size, with snow-white complexion, and with limbs endowed with great strength and elasticity, no less than symmetry and elegance. She had deep blue eyes, overshadowed by dark slightly-arched brows; the hair was also dark, and fell in wild profusion down to her shoulders. Her features were exquisitely moulded; her nose was somewhat long; she had oval cheeks, a round chin, and white, close-set teeth; the neck was gracefully bent; on her pale countenance, as well as on that of Dolcino, dwelt a settled expression of deep, half-unconscious melancholy, such as is generally observed in persons destined to a premature and violent end.*

Two portraits, purporting to be real likenesses of the heresiarch and of his partner in guilt, circulate in Northern Italy. The originals are said to be miniatures in an ancient parchment MS., now in possession of Signor Bartolommeo Tettone, of Novara; good copies of both, of the size of life, are to be seen in the studio of Signor Pietro Giacobini, an artist of merit at Campertogno. A lithograph of that of Fra Dolcino was published by the Jesuits of Novara, as a frontispiece to a worthless pamphlet on the subject, on the occurrence of their annual distribution of prizes to their pupils.†

These portraits, however, bear not the slightest mark

* Rimella, Lega de' Valsesiani, &c., who states he derived his information from a very ancient MS.; as he thinks, the work of one Dolcino's own contemporaries, p. 80. These pictures have been somewhat improved upon by Morbio, Storia dei Municipii Italiani, vol. v. Storia di Novara, p. 94., note.

† T. Crociati Novaresi alla Giornata di Monte Zebello, azione Drammatica, &c., Novara, 1846.

of authenticity. The gaudy Spanish costume, the beaver and plume of Dolcino, and the Tuscan, be-ribboned straw-hat of Margaret, belong in all probability to the 17th century, and are altogether out of keeping, not only with the times, but also with the humour of Fra Dolcino, who continued to his dying day faithful to the tunic and white mantle of the apostolic garb first introduced by Sagarelli. The bandit-like appearance of the arch-heretic, and the coquettishly half-drawn dagger of his beloved, are the evident creation of the ignorance and fancifulness of an age of bad taste.

The name of the heroine is given by some as Margareta di Trank, which might designate a German origin, if indeed it was not a corruption of Trent. She was known by the emphatic appellation of Margaret the Beautiful. It is added that she was an orphan, heiress of noble parents, and had been placed for her education in a monastery of St. Catherine in Trent; that there Dolcino—who had also been a monk, or at least a novice, in a convent of the Order of the Humiliati, in the same town, and had been expelled in consequence either of his heretic tenets, or of immoral conduct—succeeded nevertheless in becoming domesticated in the nunnery of St. Catherine, as a steward or agent to the nuns, and there accomplished the fascination and abduction of the wealthy heiress.* It is not a little remarkable that the order of the Humiliati, first established about the year 1014, were often suspected of heterodoxy. Under the pontificate of Innocent III., 1198-1216, they were charged with the various heresies of the Patarini, the Cathari, and Poor Men of Lyons.† Dolcino was indeed a monk in their convent at Trent: it was there, perhaps, that he first meditated rebellion against Rome.

* Rimella, La Sacra Lega de' Valsesiani, &c., p. 80–82.

† Tiraboschi, Humiliator. Veter. Monument., 3 vols. 4to. Milan, 1776, Diss. iii. § 3.

C. Dolcino's Companions.—Ambrogio Salamone.

Besides Sagarelli, Longino di Cattaneo, and Milano Sola, all of whom are made to play a very brilliant part in all deeds of arms, Baggiolini mentions* one Ambrogio Salamone, a name not occurring in the older records on this subject. There might have been such a man, nevertheless, and probably also a man of conspicuous birth and rank. A noble family of that name, now extinct, for a long time held feudal sway at Serravalle, with the title of Lords or Counts of that place. Baggiolini adds, that Salamone forsook Dolcino in his greatest need, and passed over to the Catholic party† just as Dolcino pitched his camp on the summit of the Rock of the Bare Wall.

D. First Hostilities.—Nicholas Trivet.

A long tissue of Dolcino's warlike exploits, from his first appearance at Gattinara to his retirement into the Alps of the Valnera, is given by Baggiolini, who is not, in this instance, borne out by any of the chronicles to which access may be obtained; and whose narrative rests, therefore, entirely on those authorities of which he alone had any knowledge. His account is, however, so circumstantial and positive, though in some parts altogether erroneous and absurd, that it is impossible to look upon it as the work of his own invention; and many of its particulars are sufficiently interesting to deserve a succinct exposition of them.

According to his version, Dolcino first came into the

* Dolcino e i Patareni, p. 94. † Ibid. p. 111.; Krone, p. 76.

diocese of Vercelli towards the end of 1303, a statement which cannot be reconciled with the date of his Second Epistle, written from Dalmatia in the Christmas week of that year, nor with the positive assertion of all other writers who put off his first arrival till the following year.

Gattinara, he continues, was then in a defenceless state, as the feudal lords of the Avogadro and Arboreo families had been driven from it by their Ghibeline opponents. Dolcino, either called, or at least abetted, by these latter, took possession of the town, and fortified himself in it. From this first stronghold he commenced his career of plunder and violence, strengthened by the support of the inhabitants of Gattinara, a fierce people at all times, now highly exasperated against their late lords, and the episcopal party to which these belonged.

The Bishops of Novara and Vercelli, the Marquis of Montferrat, and other lords armed themselves against Dolcino, and held a council at Vercelli to devise the best means of annihilating such dangerous enemies. Dolcino, who did not trust the people of Gattinara, and did not think his position there sufficiently strong, without relinquishing his hold of the town constructed a fort on the brow of a hill rising "at two sling-throws" from Gattinara, and bearing now the name of St. Lorenzo.

From Gattinara to the summit of the hill, there is little more than an hour's easy ascent. The hill is sufficiently smooth towards the town, and mantled all over with vineyards, which yield that wine for which Gattinara is renowned in Northern Italy. But on its north-eastern side, the skirts of the hill hang rather steep on the bank of the Sesia, in many a bold cliff, which, though covered with rich verdure and brushwood, may be considered as of arduous access. On the very top of the hill are the ruins of a castle, where, tradition says, the good Lombard queen Theodolind had once her home,—a kind of shrine and her-

mitage to which she repaired in her old age, when weary of the world. Between the mountain and the river, amongst those towering cliffs, there lies a little open space, not exactly level, but made up of gently swelling knolls, which bears the name of Piano, or Pra di Cordova. The same tradition adds that this plain was once part of a great lake, and that in this lake one of the children of queen Theodolind fell and was drowned: that the inconsolable queen, anxious to have at least the cold remains of her child, ordered the lake to be drained by opening a mighty gap in the mountains on the river side. The plain of Cordova does certainly bear the appearance of a bottom from which the waters have subsided; and the peasantry of the neighbourhood remember the existence of large iron rings, to which, they fancy, the boats that plied on the lake were once fastened. The corruption of a vast quantity of dead fish and other refusal, suddenly exposed to the air and heat of the sun by the sinking of the waters, caused, they add, a mortality in the country.

Some of the chroniclers of Dolcino's deeds say, truly, that he settled in this plain of Cordova, and that he continued for some time unmolested, building huts, planting vineyards, &c., but always without assuming an offensive attitude.*

But Baggiolini describes the works made above this Pra di Cordova, and all over the mountain, as something resembling the doings of the Tyrolese under Andreas Hofer.† Massive walls, rocks hanging on the air, and above all an immense tunnel of more than a mile in length, by which the fort on the hill was put in communication with the town below,—a statement which he would never have made, had he only been once at Gat-

* Rimella, Lega de' Valsesiani, &c. p. 85.; Relazione dell' Introduzione, &c., MS.

† Baggiolini, p. 71.

tinara (as such a tunnel would exceed any of the great excavations of Napoleon on the Simplon road), and which we must look upon as a popular exaggeration of the account, also fabulous, given by the author of "Historia Dulcini," in Muratori, of a similar subterranean passage on Mount Zebello.*

The Bishops and Lords, assembled at Vercelli, after in vain trying to bring the heretic to reason by the means of a peaceful legation, resolved to march against him. They had only 2,000 men under their standards: Dolcino had no less than 5,000 followers. The Catholics divided their little army into two bands, the one commanded by Filippone di Langosco, Count of Lumello, a man well known in the history of those times, and composed of Novarese and their allies; the other by Solomon Coccarella, a Vercellese, who led the troops of his town and diocese. These two divisions marched, the first on the right, the second on the left bank of the Sesia. They were, it is said, three days in getting over the distance from Vercelli to Gattinara, about twenty Italian miles, owing partly to the wretched state of the roads, as they had to flounder across deep swamps, now converted into the rich fields which constitute the wealth of the Lombard plain; partly, also, to the egregious disorder and dissension reigning in their camp,—evils which greatly increased and became incurable, when Filippone di Langosco, the only leader that was worth his salt, quitted his post, to hasten to the rescue of one of his castles which had been laid siege to by the Beccaria of Pavia.

Dolcino, who had been watching the movements of his enemy, prepared for their reception by placing his own troops also on both sides of the river. He had given the command of his divisions to Sagarelli and Cattaneo,

* *Antè*, chap. iv. § 15.

† See Appendix G., Missionaries to Dolcino.

whom he called his Peter and Paul; but the belligerent parties scarcely came to any decisive encounter. The Catholics, incapable of discipline, scattered themselves about the country, plundering the defenceless peasantry; many of them fell prisoners into their adversaries' hands. Not a few also spontaneously surrendered, embraced the doctrines and followed the fortunes of Dolcino; the rest fell back in confusion. Before the 28th of March, 1304, the first Catholic expedition was thus at an end, and from April to July the heresiarch was left in full and peaceful possession of the country.*

The result of their first efforts had thrown the people of Vercelli into the greatest discouragement, when an unexpected aid, almost from heaven, came to raise up their drooping spirits. There came in those days to Vercelli, an Englishman, by name Nicholas Trivet,—a man of knightly rank, but who had entered the order of the Preaching Friars, or Dominicans, had signalised himself by his hot zeal against the heretics of Southern France, and was now travelling through Italy, preaching the "Truce" of God, and striving hard to bring about a universal reconciliation between the feudal lords and the free cities of Lombardy. The name of this missionary is by no means unknown. He was the son of Sir Thomas Trivet, of Norfolk, Chief Justice of the King's Bench; he was educated at Oxford, and died in 1328. One of his works, "Annales Sex Regum Angliæ," was edited by Ant. Hall, in 1719.† Of his deeds in Italy we have indeed no account in the very numerous biographical sketches collected by the editor at the beginning of the said work. It is only stated that he was for

* Baggiolini, 78-88.

† Nicholai Triveti, Annal. Sex Regum Angliæ, Edid. Anton. Hall, Oxon. 1719.

some time at the University of Paris, as he informs us himself in his own preface, "Cum aliquando in studio moraremur Parisiensi," &c. Baggiolini* adds, we know not on what authority, that he was there in 1304,—the very year in which he is described as stirring up the Catholics against Dolcino in the diocese of Vercelli. Still it is difficult to conceive how Baggiolini could even have heard of such a man, and the part Trivet may actually have played in Italian politics and Italian crusades may form a fit subject for the lucubrations of English scholars.

Trivet, then, according to Baggiolini's wonderful tale, had been sent to Lombardy by Barnabas, a general of the Dominician order, a native of Vercelli. He had already endeavoured at Casale to effect a peace between Giovanni III., Marquis of Montferrat, and the free city of Alexandria. Hence, having heard of the terror inspired by Dolcino and his partisans, he had come to Vercelli, proclaimed there the truce of God, and turned all the energies of a weak, only because discordant, population against a common enemy. He soon assembled an army of 7,000 combatants.

At the head of this force, Baggiolini† places one Raineri di Monferrato. Some difficulty arises with regard to this personage, as it is known that the last Marquis Giovanni III. died without male heirs in 1305, and his estates passed to the branch of the Paleologues, by right of female inheritance. Neither in San Giorgio's Chronicle, nor in other historians of Montferrat, nor in Litta's Celebrated Italian Families‡, does the name of Raineri occur in the Montferrat pedigree, not at least at

* Dolcino e i Patareni, p. 114.; Krone, p. 79.

† Dolcino e i Patareni, p. 83.

‡ Litta, Famiglie Celebri di Italia, art. Monferrato.

this epoch. On first receiving tidings of so mighty an armament, Dolcino resolved upon withdrawing to the mountain region, where his sectarians eagerly followed him, "in expectation," the same writers continue, "that their chief could, in case of famine, renew the miracle of the loaves and fishes, or turn stones into bread in their behalf."

Dolcino, however, aimed at effecting his retreat in perfect safety, and with that view he first collected his forces at Gattinara, only leaving a garrison of two hundred men in his fort above the Pra' di Cordova, under the order of his brave, trusty Margaret.

Two emissaries of the English Trivet, probably both of them Englishmen, by name Matthew and Rudolf, possibly sent to convert some of the heretics, were found in Dolcino's camp, and hung as spies and traitors. The people of Vercelli aroused by the fiery words of Trivet, rushed to the castle or gaol where some of the captive heretics were imprisoned: they forced open the doors, and put those helpless creatures — women and children amongst them — to a barbarous death. A high-minded nobleman, Pietro degli Avogadri, in vain stepped between the rabble and the objects of their fury. He was himself struck to the ground with a stone, and it was with the greatest difficulty that his mangled body was rescued by his kinsfolk from the murderers' hands.

But the townspeople forgot that some of their own prisoners were also in Dolcino's hands. Mad with revenge, the heresiarch ordered fifty of these to be led forth and strung up like dogs, on as many high posts or stakes in the market-square of Gattinara. By such awful reprisals did those ruthless partisans prelude their hostilities.

It was meanwhile Dolcino's plan to evacuate Gattinara, to cross over to Romagnano (he had thrown a bridge of boats across the stream), and hence by Prato, Grignasco,

and Borgosesia, ascend the river on the left bank, as far as Varallo. He would not relinquish his fort on the Pra' di Cordova, but left there Margaret with her 200 men, who had all sworn to die sooner than surrender. On the side on which he was marching also? he had left a rearguard, composed of 200 equally devoted men, under the guidance of Ambrogio Salamone, who took up his station at a Franciscan convent, immediately above Romagnano, lying on a little hill commanding that town, not indeed steep and rugged as Baggiolini describes it, but favourable to ambuscades under cover of its thick woods. The ruins of that convent were still extant a few years ago, when the Marquis Caccia, of Novara, built on them a magnificent white Palazzo, a very conspicuous object in the midst of that verdant landscape.

The Catholic vanguard, 1700 men strong, led by Raineri of Montferrat, marched into Gattinara, which it found ominously lonely and still. They reached the main square, where the ghastly spectacle of those fifty bodies hanging on their gibbets, met their view. Unable otherwise to assuage their rage, for every soul had fled, they vented it upon the houses and chattels of the inoffensive inhabitants, and it was with the greatest trouble that their leader was able to withdraw them from that work of wanton destruction. He then marched on the track of his foe, crossed over to Romagnano, went past the fatal hill where Salamone lay hid, and pushed forward towards Grignasco where Dolcino had come to a halt. Some of his men threw themselves upon Prato Dolcino's birthplace, lying at a quarter of a mile above Romagnano, and there scattered themselves about the town to burn the house where the heretic was born, and to seek out and slaughter his relations. The whole of the Catholic troops had thus left Romagnano behind it,

and had already broken up its ranks, when out rushed Salamone from his hiding-place and suddenly assailed them in the rear. The whole road between Romagnano and Grignasco is hemmed in between the hills and the river, so that the hindmost men of the Catholics, thrown into disorder by that first onset, huddled up to those before them, and the confusion became general. That was the moment Dolcino was waiting for, to attack the foremost ranks in his turn. The massacre became general, and the first body of the Catholics was thus utterly annihilated. Raineri of Montferrat, severely wounded, only made his escape good by plunging into the Sesia, which ran then very high, and where many, whose horses were not equally good swimmers, found a watery grave. He came back with many bitter invectives against the cowardice and insubordination of his soldiers, whilst these on their own part ascribed all the disasters of the day to the inexperience and inconsiderate haste of their leader.

Salamone, however, was not content with his signal success. He wandered far and wide in pursuit of the fugitives, and lost sight of the strong position that was entrusted to his care. On his return he found that the enemy had been beforehand with him; and on attempting to retake his former station by storm, Salamone was repulsed.

The main army of the Catholics had, in the mean time, reached Gattinara, and there, although disheartened by the news of the loss of its vanguard, was still bent on pursuing its course, animated by the eloquence of Trivet, who headed the troops, clad in a full suit of armour and bearing the standard of redemption aloft, and by the example of a young hero, Simone da Colobiano, the same who had taken the hill above Romagnano from Dolcino's lieutenant, and held it against his repeated assaults.*

* See Appendix L., Simone da Colobiano.

The road from Romagnano to Grignasco, and hence into the Valsesia Proper, was thus open to the enemy, at least on the left bank, and Dolcino was now compelled to continue his retreat as far as Varallo; there also, after a short halt, either unable to find a favourable position, or won by a strong bribe by the people of that town*, he withdrew still further, and only pitched his camp at his friend Milano Sola's house, at Campertogno. †

On the right bank of the river, meanwhile, Margaret of Trent still held her ground on the foot above the Pra' di Cordova. But one of the Catholics, the Marquis Manfred of Saluzzo, actuated half by religious zeal, half by a certain curiosity and chivalrous spirit of enterprise, eager to see and to take alive a woman whose beauty and valour were already the theme of such high praises, climbed the hill by many a cunning détour, and took that stronghold by surprise, in the night time. All the 200 Dolcinians died on the spot, true to their pledge. Margaret alone slipped in the dark through the fingers of the enemy who environed her; and thus, disappointing her conqueror of his most coveted prey, was able through unheard of obstacles to make her way in perfect safety to her lover.

The Marquis of Saluzzo was originally no friend to the Vercellese. He had come forward in arms to vindicate his claims to the inheritance of Montferrat, on the approaching extinction of the reigning dynasty;—we say "approaching," because that bungling Baggiolini seems to have forgotten that the events he describes, took place in 1304, and that the last Marquis Giovanni III. of Montferrat, only died in January, 1305, and it sounds rather strange that people should cast lots and

* See Appendix H., Marco Miretti.

† See Appendix F., Milano Sola.

quarrel about his substance before he was laid in his grave. The difficulties arising from contending claims to the succession of Monferrat, do not seem to have commenced before the death of Giovanni III., and it was *then* only, in all probability, that Manfred of Saluzzo occupied the disputed territory, 1305, 1306.* Even then he only came forward as an executor of the late Marquis's testament, entered Trino peacefully, and there, in March 1305, he convoked the States General of the Marquisate. There is good reason to believe, that up to March, 1305, Manfred was elsewhere and otherwise employed, and nothing leads us to suppose that he, at any time, in any manner, took an active part in the anti-heretic crusade.† In the teeth of all historical evidence, neverthless, Baggiolini continues, that he had been prevailed upon by Filippone di Langosco and Guido dalla Torre, to forego all personal considerations, and refer his claims to peaceful arbitrament; that he had even given up Trino which he occupied by might of arms on his first arrival, and had brought his own troops to swell the Catholic ranks.

These latter, in the mean while, masters of the whole of the lower valley of the Sesia, had pursued Dolcino as far as Varallo, and were preparing to attack him in his last entrenchments at Campertogno.

The position of the heresiarch was every day becoming more precarious. The eloquence of the English missionary turned the minds and hearts of the Valesians against him. One of his ablest generals, Sagarelli, lay disabled by wounds. Salamone had given proofs rather of blind impetuous valour, than either of skill or discretion. Dolcino had, however, still about 3000 com-

* Muratori, Annal. d'Ital. ad Ann. 1305, 1306.

† Irici, Rerum Patriæ Tridinens., p. 107-113. See also, San Giorgio, Muletti, &c.

batants under his orders, with these he determined to sally forth from Campertogno, and once more to give battle to his pursuers.

As he had done in previous encounters, he divided his forces into two columns, and gave the command of his right wing to Ambrogio Salamone, and of his left to Longino di Cattaneo; whilst he himself, with a few chosen men, was ready to fly to the aid of his forces wherever aid might be needed. Cattaneo, who had been highly successful in the first onset, was by a severe wound stopped in the midst of his victorious career. Dolcino stepped forward to the rescue, and on this side his presence for a long time held up the courage of the apostles, and the Catholic confederates yielded ground before them. But on the other, where Salamone had to contend with the young hero, Simone da Colobiano, and with the English enthusiast, Trivet, whose huge crucifix was to be seen everywhere in the thickest of the mêlée, the fortune of the day declared against the heretics, and the disorderly retreat of Salamone had well-nigh exposed his chief to be surrounded on all sides and compelled to lay down his arms.

At this critical juncture, the fiends of the air, not unmindful of their friends, raised a heavy storm, with snow, rain, and hail, which, driving furiously against the faces of the Catholic combatants, had the effect of cooling their ardour, and soon darkness and confusion forced the combatants asunder, and put an end to the conflict.*

Dolcino, unable any longer to take the open field, limited his operations to the fortification of Campertogno. He there established new rites and ceremonies, and attempted to reduce to practice his own forms of apostolical worship. He had full leisure for these inno-

* Baggiolini, p. 105.; Krone, p. 73.

vations, for the advanced season had by this time compelled the Catholics to slacken in their hostilities. A few had taken up their winter quarters at Varallo; the greatest number had dispersed and repaired to their own homes in the plain.

Dolcino, however, who is described by Baggiolini as a man of dark melancholy temperament, haunted by remorse and suspicion, could find no rest even under the friendly roof of his friend Milano Sola. Always apprehensive of treachery, not deeming the sojourn of Campertogno sufficiently defensible, and mistrustful of the inhabitants, he resolved upon seeking a refuge on the Alps of Valnera.

From this first place of retirement he is soon made to go over to the Parete Calva, where, Baggiolini avers, the heretics were encamped for two years. In the mean while, the Catholics are disheartened by the departure of the English missionary, who in good sooth, according to Baggiolini and Krone*, had already gone back to Paris in the course of the year 1304; and the Catholic chiefs, the Avogadro, Montferrat, and Saluzzo, had once more broken out into fresh dissensions, and abandoned the camp either in pursuit of ambitious schemes or of party and family feuds. The Valsesia was thus left to the defence of its own habitants, and for a long time Dolcino was allowed to have the upper hand.

The rest of Baggiolini's narrative, as to what took place on the Bare Wall, and on Mount Zebello, does not in the main differ from the statements we have already quoted from the Historia Dulcini. Only the whole account of these latter campaigns is given in the greatest hurry and in the utmost confusion—a confusion of which the writer himself seems well aware, as he finds it im-

* Baggiolini, p. 114.; Krone, p. 79.

possible to crowd such a multitude of events in so short a lapse of years.*

E. The Rector of Serravalle.

The name of this personage, Autemio, is given by Baggiolini†, and a singularly tragical story is attached to it. Dolcino, he relates, with a few of his followers, came unexpectedly into the neighbourhood of Serravalle, where he was looking out for a fit spot for a fortified camp, on his contemplated retreat from Gattinara. Agreeably to a custom still prevalent in those mountains, where inns, if there are any, are too often of a most wretched description, he took up his quarters at the rector or parish priest's of the village, by whom he was received with great apparent cordiality, and liberally treated with such homely fare as the parsonage afforded. Towards evening Dolcino had retired to rest, and his men had sunk in a state of intoxication, asleep in the court-yard.

From the first arrival of the heretics, the rector had been meditating treason. There was at a short distance, — at Arona or perhaps at Borgomanero, — Riccardo Tizzoni, one of the proscribed Ghibelines of Vercelli, a man who exercised no slight influence on the destinies of his country, a few years later (1309). To him the priest, Autemio, despatched a messenger, showing how great and how easy a prey was within his reach, and what a golden opportunity was offered to him of lending his country an important service, and thereby securing with honour his recall.

Tizzoni gave a favourable audience to the priest's suggestions. He marched in the night, and arrived before Serravalle, where the rector, stealing out of his house,

* Baggiolini, p. 109–112.

† Dolcino, &c., p. 64—68.; Krone, p. 43—46.

soon joined him. Under the directions of this latter, the Ghibeline chief so laid out his forces as completely to surround the village and parsonage. He had with him fifty men-at-arms and a handful of infantry—altogether about 200 men.

Dolcino, however, was not the man to be caught napping. He was up before day-break, aware of the priest's escape, and had even descried the gleam of the enemies' points as they first shone amidst the dense foliage of those hills. He had aroused his companions, entrenched himself behind the fence of the parsonage garden, and previously despatched a messenger to Gattinara, summoning Sagarelli, who commanded his main forces there, to fly to his support.

Tizzoni met thus with a reception he little anticipated. A conflict arose, mortal on both sides, but especially on the part of the assailants, who were more exposed to the enemies' shafts. Towards noon the appearance of Sagarelli at the head of thousands compelled Tizzoni to a hasty retreat. He recrossed the Sesia, and rode back to his former quarters, taking, however, the rector Autemio a captive with him.

Tizzoni had, almost against his own judgment, departed from a line of policy which was obvious to him as to most Ghibeline partisans,—that of abetting all the enemies of the Church party, were they ever so dark heretics and misbelievers. The consequence had been both serious loss and disgrace to himself. Anxious now to retrieve his error, and to wreak his vengeance on the man who had led him into it, he cast Autemio into irons, and sent him under escort of two of his men to Dolcino, stating that it was quite unwillingly that he had taken up arms against him, acting on the representations of the false priest, who had described the guests at his parsonage as a band of Swiss marauders—such as at the time were

wont to infest Italian lands, especially from the Valais — that for the rest, he (Tizzoni) entertained the greatest regard for Dolcino, whose humblest servant he professed to be (miser et honestus servus — the phrase of the day), in token of which devotion he placed into his hands the author of the evil, Autemio, to be dealt with agreeably to Dolcino's own pleasure.

Dolcino received the prisoner, gnashing his teeth with anticipated revenge. He uttered some words which were always with him the prelude of some fearful act of retributive justice. "With what measure you mete it shall be measured to you again;" he ordered the hands, ears, and nose of the poor caitiff to be cut off; and with those very words of Scripture written on a large bill on his breast, he turned him out into the wide world.

The wretched priest dragged himself to Vercelli, where lay and spiritual lords were organising their first expedition against the heretics. Leaving the track of blood all along his way, and like Dante's lost spirit in hell, —

> "Uplifting in the gloom
> The bleeding stumps, that they with gory spots
> Sullied his face —"

he stood before them and told his doleful tale. The tale was not implicitly believed, and his conduct appeared to those severe and perhaps prejudiced judges rather ambiguous and wavering. As the friend and host of heretics, he was laid under the sentence of excommunication, which struck all who harboured and abetted them. It was in vain for him to remonstrate that he had only acted on compulsion, and with a design the better to serve the interests of the Church by delivering her enemies

* "Levando i moncherin per l'aria fosca
Sì che il sangue facea la faccia sozza."
DANTE, *Inferno*, XXviii. 29—31.

into her hands. The decree had gone forth, and was never revoked. The harshness and obstinacy of the judges created great irritation among the priest's friends and relatives, who were numerous and powerful in those mountains; many of whom, together with the whole of Autemio's flock at Serravalle, hastened to join the ranks of the heresiarch.

Tradition has here evidently garbled the narrative of very simple facts. The rector of Serravalle had, as all accounts agree*, fallen in with Dolcino's views, and welcomed him at his house. On Dolcino's retiring into Upper Valsesia, he was pounced upon by the Catholics, who "severely punished him." It is not impossible that the first savage men who arrested him, inflicted upon him that very barbarous treatment which made him an object of horror to all beholders. Being brought before the authorities at Vercelli, he very probably endeavoured to justify his conduct by all manner of pretence and subterfuge; his excuses were not, however, admitted, hence the inexorable sentence of the inquisitors.

F. Milano Sola.

Baggiolini states† that this Milano Sola had one of his sons among those twenty-two prisoners who were put to death by the populace at Vercelli, in retaliation for the execution of the two English emissaries or spies of Nicholas Trivet.

* See, besides the Historia Dulcini, Rimella, La Lega dei Valsesiani, p. 85, 86.; Racconto dell' Introduzione del Eresiarcha Fra Dolcino, &c.

† Dolcino, &c., p. 99.

As the heretics were marching on Campertogno, Milano Sola, who had knelt at the altar to receive the sacrament, took in his hand the consecrated host that the priest was about to lay on his tongue, and upon that sacred symbol of the greatest of Catholic mysteries, he swore in a very loud and impressive voice, and in awful language, to avenge the cruel death of his son in the heart's blood of his murderers. This implacable old man, who is everywhere described as a peasant of great wealth and of some influence in the valley, continued to the very last a staunch friend to Dolcino. He was with him on the Bare Wall and Mount Zebello, always foremost among the combatants (though other accounts make no particular mention of him on the battle-field). Baggiolini* describes him, in the last conflict on Mount Zebello, as grappling in death with a Crusader who had given him his *coup de grace*, and fastening upon his throat with such a desperate grasp, that they were both found dead one upon the other; somewhat after the manner in which Walter Scott paints the death of Balfour of Burley in the last pages of Old Mortality.

G. Missionaries to Dolcino.

According to Baggiolini†, who is alone accountable for all the battles that took place near Gattinara and Campertogno, it was to the former place, as the Catholics were preparing to attack him, that they sent him a deputation, composed of two clergymen, — names unknown, —

* Baggiolini, p. 139.; Krone, p. 91.

† Dolcino, &c., p. 72–74.; Krone, p. 49.

and a nobleman, Arderico Arborio, offering Dolcino, if he would repent and return to the bosom of the Church, not only to grant him full pardon for himself and his followers, but also to take him as a leader of a free corps into the pay of the city of Vercelli. They also promised their mediation to reconcile him with the Pope, to release him from his monastic vows, so as to enable him to live with his Margaret in lawful wedlock. Dolcino answered, lifting up his dagger and battle-axe in the air, that those excellent friends of his had already freed him from any tie he might have contracted in his inexperienced youth. As to his connection with Margaret, he begged them to observe that he at least was satisfied with one companion for life, whilst all the decrees of popes and emperors were inefficient to prevent prelates and monks from having a whole harem about them, and whilst their very mothers and sisters were hardly safe from their unlawful passions. This was said in allusion to an edict of Frederic II., by which clergymen were forbidden from having female relations living under one roof with them. For the rest, Dolcino declared himself ready to lay down his arms, asked nothing for himself, but demanded of the clergy the renunciation of all temporal goods and power. This put an end to the negotiations.

Thus did the deputation miscarry, and the Catholics, who never were in earnest about it, and rather wished to gain time and put their enemy off his guard than hoped to make any impression upon him, proceeded with their warlike preparations.

H. Marco Miretti.

The episode we are now about to relate is by some supposed to have taken place at Campertogno, by some

on the Valnera, by some on the Bare Wall. It is, however, too universally admitted by all authorities not to have a ground of truth to stand upon. Rimella, who states that he had found it in a contemporary record he had in his hands, relates it in the following manner*:—

Dolcino was on the rock of the Parete Calva, and from there laid waste all the Valsesia. The people of this district, abandoned by their allies of Vercelli and Novara, the latter of whom, by the testimony of Morbio*, had wars in other quarters, after the ill success of the campaign of the Podestà of Varallo, Brusati, came to the determination to offer a strong bribe to Dolcino, with a view to persuade him to quit their territory and carry his devastations elsewhere.

Dolcino, who was already disposed to shift his camp, driven by distress of food, lent a favourable ear to the proposal, and the difficulty was now reduced to the finding of a person who would venture into that dreaded camp, and appear before the redoubted presence of the arch-heretic. In these straits, a young man, by name Marco Miretti, or Miletti (the name of Miretti was known till very late at Campertogno), a native of Camproso, a district of Campertogno, declared himself willing to take upon himself the risk for the sake of his country. He put on, under plain clothes, a coat of mail, proof against sword and lance, and walked up to the hill, delivered his gold, — a sum of 2000 gold florins, very considerable for those times, — and was dismissed with strict injunctions to leave the camp within two hours. There were some cogent reasons, however, why he should not only tarry beyond the prescribed time, but also step aside from the path that led out of the camp. He was

* Rimella, La Lega de' Valsesiani, p. 93, 94.

† Morbio, Municipii Italiani, tom. v., Storia di Novara, p. 95.

thus seen by one of Dolcino's sentinels, who, apprehending some hostile design on his part to acquaint himself with the localities of the camp, shot him with an arrow on the back of the neck. The wound was mortal, but Miretti dragged himself as far as his own home, where he died a saint's death, surrounded by numerous friends, forgiving his enemies, and exhorting all good Christians to fight the heretics *à toute outrance*.

Baggiolini* relates the event as taking place at Campertogno, and states that the messengers were sent from Varallo and were two in number, that one of them was killed on the spot, and the other, Marco Miretti, though severely wounded, lived to tell the result of his mission to his friends at home.

Morbio, as we have seen, says that it was not the Varallese, but the municipality of Novara, which, having their hands full of other business, managed to bribe Dolcino off their own territory, heedless of the mischief which, to save themselves, they let loose on the lands of their neighbours.

Others again contend† that the deputation was sent by the people of Campertogno to Dolcino on the Valnera; others state that its object was merely to propose an exchange of prisoners; an object which Dolcino himself had greatly at heart, as he repeatedly offered to give up his captives against as many heads of oxen, sheep, &c.

It is also added, that Teseo Arboreo and Luca Tornielli, no less than the bishops of Vercelli, obstinately at all times rejected Dolcino's advances: and that in his greatest stress for food, and to spare his prisoners the agony of unavoidable starvation, he put them to death with the sword; invariably absolving them, before he sent them out to

* Baggiolini, p. 106.; Krone, p. 73.

† Relatione dell' Introduzione del Eresiarca, &c., MS.

execution, in his capacity as a high priest, not only from all sins, but also from the excommunication which he himself in the same capacity had launched against them as well as against all his opponents.*

I. The Thirty Amazons.

Instead of thirty chosen men, meeting a heroic death in defence of a post intrusted to them by Dolcino, tradition assigns the honour of that exploit to thirty women, armed as warriors and commanded by the intrepid Margaret. It adds also that, far from falling victims to their devotion, these fierce heroines drove back the men of Mosso, killing as many as came too near their formidable weapons.†

J. Heretic and Catholic Atrocities.

Those who are familiar with the history of religious wars at all epochs, will readily believe that fanaticism would, in the thirteenth century, lead to deeds of horror on the side of the orthodox, no less than on that of the heretic party. Friends and enemies have equally painted Dolcino as a man of quick resentful disposition. The mere execution of the two English spies caught plotting treason in his camp, and the mutilation of two monks,

* Baggiolini, p. 108, 109.; Krone, p. 75.

† Relazione dell' Introduzione del Eresiarcha Fra Dolcino, &c.; also, Baggiolini, p. 116.; Krone, p. 80. The latter are both very positive as to the fact, and quote the authority of Modena's Histor. Vercellens.

who came on the same errand to Mount Zebello, would be consonant with the usages of war, in all ages and countries. The treatment the Rector of Serravalle is said to have met with at his hands, however barbarous, might, if it were true, hardly be deemed undeserved; and the fifty men he ordered to be hanged at Gattinara, would only have fallen victims to a retaliation which the inhumanity of the Vercellese themselves had called forth. The death of Marco Miretti cannot be laid to his charge; that unfortunate man only perished in consequence of some untoward accident. Dolcino himself is said* to have been sorely grieved at this mishap, and to have even sent the man or men who had so strictly interpreted his orders with respect to the two hours' time allowed to Miretti for his departure to Simone da Colobiano, to be used by him according to his own discretion. For the rest, self-interest no less than humanity, at all times would have prompted Dolcino to show mercy and forbearance to his prisoners, as they were his only resource against the extremities of famine. We have already seen that he spared no efforts to effect an exchange of his captives against the provisions he was in urgent need of; and that the cold policy of his adversaries, to the very last frustrated his best intentions. We are told elsewhere†, that in the greatest stress of hunger, some of Dolcino's companions turned a wistful eye upon their captives, proposing a deed of cannibalism, to which Dolcino firmly denied his consent. It is true, that he afterwards preferred that these prisoners should die by the sword rather than be slowly consumed by want, whereas the most humane course would have been to suffer them to depart; but we know from recent in-

* Baggiolini, p. 106.

† Baggiolini, p. 108.; Krone, p. 75.

stances how difficult it is to prescribe a line of conduct to a man under such peculiar difficulties. War has its own terrible exigencies, and Dolcino had to deal with adversaries who shrunk from no means, fair or foul, to bring him to extremities.

From the top of Mount Zebello, we are also informed*, Fra Dolcino rolled down to the feet of his besiegers, the heads he had just severed from the prisoners' busts. He made, be it understood, a parade of his cruelty. He wished to trade for those prisoners, to compel their friends to ransom them: we may be allowed to believe that, when he perceived the uselessness of those bloody demonstrations, he desisted from them. The mutilation of defenceless persons, and especially of women and children, however they might be excused on the score of the universal barbarity of an age which, deeming life the most precious of all blessings, seemed to think less of the loss of limbs, eyes, nose, &c., would, however, call forth all our indignation, were it not that even those cruelties may be supposed to have been inflicted by Dolcino, with a view to soften the heart of his enemies, by showing them that the same terrible hand which could thus lop off ears and noses, might also, if goaded by hunger, strike off the heads of those devoted hostages. At any rate, it must not be forgotten, that the charge preferred against him in the Historia Dulcini of having tortured to death an unfortunate woman and her new-born infant†, is by Baggiolini retorted against Dolcino's enemies, the Catholics themselves. He says most distinctly‡, that the Crusaders having taken five of the wives of the heretics, hanged them by their feet; that one of these, in the midst of such horrible tortures,

* Baggiolini, p. 126.; Krone p. 84. † *Antè*, chap. iv. § 21.
‡ Baggiolini, p. 134.

gave premature birth to a child, and that even dying, she implored the by-standers to give baptism to the new-born creature; that a humane woman who was present, stepped forward to administer the holy rite, but one of the soldiers pushed her back with great harshness, and even harshly struck down the pious hand that held the water of life, lest the offspring of a heretic should be free from punishment, either in this world or in the next. Krone*, probably owing to his imperfect apprehension of Baggiolini's meaning, states that the five wives of the "Patareni" all bore the symptoms of approaching maternity, and that with them were also extinguished the innocent germs they bore in their bosom. All this was done by the immediate order of the aged Bishop of Vercelli.

K. The Last Conflict.

The final battle, on the 23rd of March, 1307, lasted all day. The heretics asked no quarter. When struck to the ground, they still fought on their knees. Dolcino, Cattaneo, and a few of their followers, were found in a hole in the rock. Cattaneo was laid on the ground by a heavy stroke; the others were likewise overpowered. The whole hill when it came into the power of the conquerors was found strewn with the bodies of the heretics, long since dead by starvation and already decayed.

* Krone, p. 86.

L. Simone da Colobiano.

The part that this distinguished man may have played in the campaigns against Dolcino, seems, indeed, very problematic matter. According to Baggiolini*, he was born in 1285, and we have seen in an authentic document that he was still a minor in July 1306. In the year 1304, he was, therefore, only in his eighteenth year; but he had already the reputation of one of the oldest generals, no less than stoutest soldiers in his time. Indeed, the Cavaliero Cibrario, an accurate writer, and generally resting on positive proof†, informs us, that Simone was already a warrior of great experience (provatissimo guerriero) in 1301, as he indeed must be, since the Guelphs of Vercelli chose him as their leader when they drove the Tizzoni and their Ghibeline partisans out of their city. He was, however, at that time, in all probability not more than sixteen years old! In 1307, again, as we know from the letter of Clement V. to Philip of France‡, he enjoyed sufficient authority to presume to write to the pontiff, urging the claims of his kinsmen, the Bishop of Vercelli and the other Avogadri, to indemnity for the losses they had incurred in consequence of their efforts against Dolcino. A presumption on his part which was well grounded on the eminent services he had performed in behalf of the Guelph or Church party. Whether Simone himself ever actually took arms against the heresiarch, in the year 1304, and performed all the prodigies of valour attributed to him by Baggiolini, we have no means to ascertain. His

* Baggiolini, p. 172–178.; Krone, p. 63, 64.

† Storia del Conte Rosso, e Frammenti Storici; Vercelli, il vercellese e l'Ossola, Turin, 1851, p. 177.

‡ *Antè*, chap. v. § 2.

name certainly occurs in no other version of Dolcino's history. Only amongst the MS. Biscioni, in the Archive of Vercelli (vol. ii., fol. 34 retro, and vol. iii., fol. 103), we found a deed, dated July 19th, 1306, in which the City of Vercelli makes Simone a donation of a place called Il Borghetto near the Po, and its territory, in return for one hundred and fifty livres of Pavia, which the said Simone had lent to the community of Vercelli, to enable it to pay the soldiers encamped against the heretics on the trenches at Tivero. The circumstance of Simone being yet a minor is expressly noticed in the deed. Other remunerations to persons who signalised themselves in the same campaigns against the Cathari, equally occur in the Biscioni MSS. In 1306, at least, Simone was, therefore, to all appearance no longer in the camp of the Crusaders.

M. James de Quaregna.

Baggiolini* does not hesitate to assert that this leader of the Crusaders from Vercelli, was killed in that encounter which, we have seen†, took place on the 1st of May, 1306, on Mount Zebello, when the Catholics were decoyed into Dolcino's fort by a stratagem of the heresiarch. But the author of the Historia Dulcini‡, names James de Quaregna, together with his kinsmen Peter de Quaregna and Thomas de Casanova, as forming part of the deputation which was sent to Pope Clement V., in France, after the 23rd of March of the following year.

* Baggiolini, p. 126.; Krone, p. 84. † *Antè*, chap. iv. § 15.
‡ *Antè*, chap. v. § 1.

And yet the latter-named writer was describing what fell under his own observation; he wrote evidently with a view to flatter the Bishop of Vercelli and his kindred the Avogadri, and he must have known whether one of the leaders of the crusade had fallen in the war, or had rather survived to bring the Pope tidings of the victory.

N. Papal Munificence.

A letter of Pope Clement V., dated August 30th, 1307, is quoted by Rimella*, but without assigning the sources from which he derived it, by virtue of which that Pontiff as a reward to all the distinguished families of Vercelli, Novara, and the Valsesia, who had displayed the greatest zeal and valour in the crusade against Dolcino, he confers upon all of them and their descendants the titles of Knights and Counts of the Holy Church, with all the honours and privileges appertaining to that rank. The Bull gives the names of all the illustrious houses thus honoured, and enumerates all the signal advantages accruing to them from this distinction. By way of a prelude to pontifical bounty, the Pope "confirms all the said families in the estates, lands, &c. already in their possession."

O. The Execution.

By some writers†, Margaret is said to have been made to stand by, a witness to all the sufferings of Dolcino, at Ver-

* Rimella, Lega de' Valsesiani, p. 115—117. See also Morbio Storia dei Municipii Italiani, vol. v.; Storia di Novara, p. 98.

† Baggiolini, p. 144.; Krone, p. 90, 91.

celli; then to be removed to Biella, where her own doom awaited her. The death-knell of Dolcino was told by a famous bell of Vercelli, named "La Campana dell' Orenga." One of the by-standers, a nobleman, was ill-advised enough to strike Margaret in the face, as she was led to execution. The populace, already affected with strong sympathy in her behalf, well-nigh tore the cowardly offender into pieces. The ashes of the heretics were strewn into the sands of the Cervo.

P. Campo Dolcino.

At the foot of the Splugen Pass, on the Road to Chiavenna, in Valtellina, there is a spot bearing the name of Campo Dolcino. It is not impossible that the Heretic leader may have sojourned there at the time of his first wandering from Trent into the mountains of Milan and Como, previous to his escape into Dalmatia in 1303. Our endeavours to procure some evidence to that effect, have however been unavailing.

THE END.

London:
Spottiswoodes and Shaw,
New-street-Square.

00032609

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 02 April, 2016